THE GEOGRAPHY SOCIETY BULLETIN

January 1845 FIRST SECTION MEMOIRS, EXTRACTS, ANALYSES AND REPORTS, p. 5-30:

A FEW WEEKS in the Samoa and Viti archipelagoes, by Captain Gabriel Lafond de Lurcy.

p.5 After losing my ship at Tongatabou in an equinoctial hurricane, I embarked, with half the men who had survived the wreck, on the English whaler Lloyd, whose captain had very kindly taken me on board. The latter was to continue whaling in Polynesia and leave me in the Mariana Islands before working the Japanese station. As for me, I thought I would find a ship in the Mariana Islands to take me back to the Philippines from where I had set out on this unfortunate voyage.

We headed for the Keppel and Boscawen Islands, which were first called the Cocos and Verraders Islands ["Traitors"] by Le Maire and Shouten who discovered them, [p. 6] then Keppel and Boscawen by Wallis who sighted them on the 13th July 1767[1].

The weather was clear, the sea smooth, and we could see these two lands distinctly; we even noticed a large reef shoal which lies between them. The channel separating them is located approximately in latitude 15° 51'33" and longitude 176° 37' west of the Paris meridian.

Here is the position given to them by Krusenstern:

The northern one. Latitude 15° 50' south.
Longitude 185° 57' east of Greenwich.

The southern one. Latitude 15° 56' south.
Longitude 185° 49'36" east which corresponds, for the channel of which I spoke, to 176° 30' west of Paris or a 7' difference with regard to our chronometric observations.

Boscawen, the northernmost island, is cone-shaped, high and almost entirely covered in trees from two-thirds of the way up; strictly speaking, it is simply the dead crater of a volcano.

Keppel Island is low and undulating; it appeared to us very fertile: everywhere the soil is hidden beneath vigorous plant-growth, and on the beach, numerous coconut palms form an attractive curtain of greenery. English and American whalers find all kinds of fresh provisions there. It is also said that it serves as a refuge for a horde of sailors who have deserted and now live there in perfect harmony with the natives.

We sailed past this island to the south-west sufficiently close to be able to distinguish natives coming and going on the beach; but no canoe came alongside us; presumably the reefs make it impossible to touch land at this point on the coast. The reefs [p.7] on the north-west part of Keppel do not figure on any map; and, nevertheless, the sea breaks over them with extraordinary violence: we therefore cannot urge sailors too strongly to take the greatest possible care when navigating in these waters.

From Keppel and Boscawen Islands, we steered for the Navigator Islands Archipelago, to which I shall here restore their true name of the Samoa Islands; and on the 14th April 1831, we were in sight of Opoulou Island, or Oahtouah Island on old maps.

As Captain How wanted to call at Apia Harbour, where he thought he would be able to obtain abundant provisions, he headed for the eastern tip of this big …….
HALF PAGE TEXT MISSING -[retrieved in 2017][translation completed by ST:]

[1] Niuatoputapu and Tafahi, in the northen part of Tonga archipelago

…. land.

With the help of a nice wind from the South-East, we easily passed around the small island of Manoua[2] and went on along the north coast of Opoulou. I shall not attempt to draw in details the enchanting scenery that appeared in front of our eyes as soon as we saw the first land parts of the Samoa islands. Everywhere adorable greenery, magnificent trees, wide beaches surrounded by reefs, welcoming bays and villages beautifully located in the middle of groups of coconut trees, with fresh water streams on the sides, running in cascades from nearby mountains. Opoulou island seemed to me to be much superior to Tongatabou et even Eua, when taking into account the beauty of the landscape et the apparent fertility of the land. I would add that I did not see any of those villages mentioned by Lapeyrouse which would be wide as towns and extending from the mountains to the seashore. Probably this famous navigator's narrative was exaggerating, or we must think that these villages, had they indeed existed, have now disappeared.

[back to translation by Deborah Pope]

[p.8] Carried along by a strong wind, the convolutions of the coast disappeared before us as if by magic and we were not long reaching the entrance of Apia harbour. A native, brought out to us from shore in a canoe, had offered to pilot the ship and had taken up his position with me on the bow; he said to me in his language: *Lele*, good; *Covi*, bad; according to whether we were taking the right or wrong direction; I then translated these instructions to Captain How. To be on the safe side, two men had been positioned as look-outs on the topgallant cross- trees and were scanning the sea in order to be able to indicate the reefs to us. As the wind remained in the south, we were obliged to tack; this we did safely amidst the reefs, and soon we were in the narrow and difficult passage left by the two reefs which leads right into Apia harbour. After a time, the anchor dropped six and a half fathoms into the sandy bottom of a totally secure basin.

As we approached the harbour, a large number of canoes, full of natives of both sexes, had come out to meet us and when all the measures dictated by prudence had been taken, everyone was allowed to come on board and bartering immediately commenced. We thus obtained a few hogs, a very small number of chickens and baskets of yams, taro and coconuts. At the time I visited the Samoa Islands, the English missionaries had not yet settled there. The inhabitants' primitive nature had therefore not been altered by contact with them and I was able to observe it in all its naive simplicity. The men seemed full of confidence with respect to us; they addressed us as if they had known us for a long time. They spoke very fast, accompanying their speech, which for us was nearly incomprehensible, with gestures expressing their joy at seeing us anchor on their shores. The women were of those happy children of Oceania described so charmingly by Cook, Bougainville and Lapeyrouse, and everything seemed to indicate that our sailors would not find them very unkind. However my duty as a historian obliges me to say that they appeared quite reserved during the first few days and that the only favours they bestowed on the ship's beguiling libertines were flirtatious enticements of no consequence.

The next day, at dawn, I went ashore with Captain How and two or three armed sailors. Two Englishmen, who had been living in these islands for a long while, acted as our guides. They assured us that we were in no danger disembarking at Apia; but this would perhaps not be the case anywhere else on the coast and they justified their claims by their own story.

They had been kidnapped formerly by the natives of Tou-tou-ila, keen to make use of the Europeans' well-known superiority in the handling of firearms for their wars. Perhaps these veracious characters only intended to deceive us about the cause of their stay in these islands

[2] Add. 2017 : obviously Lafond's mistake for the name of the Eastern part of American Samoa group (Manua), which is much further to the East. If indeed his ship came to the « Eastern tip » of Upolu, the islet was Nuutele.

where deserters from English and American whalers arrive daily and convicts from New Holland come in search of impunity. People still remember an English whaler which, 3 days after having anchored at Apia, had already lost seventeen sailors and an officer, seduced by the charms of this happy island.

What first attracted our attention on landing was the meeting house or *Fare-tete*, a large building made entirely of Latania and coconut palm wood and leaves. Nothing could be more attractive than the coconut fibre lashings used to hold the roof beams in place and thus ensure the solidity of the edifice, whose frame is as shiny as our most ornate furniture.

The village of Apia consists of a few, rather wretched-looking huts, scattered haphazardly under clusters of coconut palms. From there we continued into the neighbouring forest, escorted by a number of curious natives who had swelled our numbers.

I had already had many opportunities of admiring the luxuriant vegetation of Malaysian and Polynesian countries but I had never seen such magnificent trees, such delightful shady foliage and such a wealth of tones. Garlands of creepers hung down from the highest treetops, winding their way through the thousand branches of these giants of the plant kingdom until they reached their enormous trunks. The charming purple-breasted Polynesian turtle-dove, dazzling white egrets, kingfishers, humming birds and hosts of wood-pigeons and other birds with motley plumage enlivened this majestic and lonely place, from which we reluctantly tore ourselves away to return on board. We did not want to go any further on our first excursion in the country since we had noticed on the way some huts apparently abandoned by their inhabitants as we drew near. We left it to our guides to reassure them that our intentions were peaceable and to acquaint them with our desire to travel around the neighbourhood.

According to our interpreters who, I think, were quite well-informed, the population of the Samoa Islands can be estimated as follows:

Sevaï ……..	25,000 inhabitants
Opouzou ……	22,000
Tou-Tou-ila ……	12,000
Manona ……..	9,000
Apolina ……..	5,000
The Manoua group alone ……..	25,000
Total ……	85,000 inhabitants

On the authority of his English interpreter, Frasior, Dumont d'Urville evaluates this population at only 80,000. It would be quite difficult to say which of these two figures is even approximately accurate; for these different calculations are based on observations taken of the coastal villages' population, the Europeans having no knowledge whatsoever of those inland.

Admiral Dumont d'Urville, so sadly lost to science at the very moment he was reaping the reward of glory for his long and laborious work, says in the fourth volume of his last voyage : ' This man Frasior, who seems to know the country and the Samoa archipelago quite well, also gives me the real names of the islands which compose it. The name Hamoa instead of Samoa, which I had already bestowed on this group, had been given to me by the inhabitants of the Tonga Islands, who never pronounce the letter *s*, for which they normally substitute the letter *h*.'

When writing these lines, the illustrious admiral had probably forgotten the remark I had made to him during a meeting of our Geography Society, that the generic name of this group was misspelt on the map of Oceania and that it should be written Samoa instead of Hamoa.

Subsequently, on his return from his last voyage, he assured me at Mr Jomard's that he shared my opinion. Here, moreover, are the names of the different Navigator or Samoa Islands; names I myself obtained on the spot and which tally perfectly with those given by Dumont d'Urville, going from east to west.

The three islands *Olo-singa, Tohou* and *Feti-nouta* are designated by the collective name of *Manoua*.

Then comes the Samoa archipelago itself made up of *Tou-tou-ila, Ana-moua, Opoulou, Manona, Apolina* and *Sevay*.

Here are a few more words of these islands' language, which is gentle and harmonious and not very different from the Polynesians' mother tongue:

Lemon	*Moli*
Banana	*Fahi*
Yam	*Oufe*
Taro	*Kala*
Breadfruit	*Olou manoutang*
Bird	*Manou*
Chicken	*Moa*
Coconut	*Niou*
Fish	*Ita*
Pig	*Poa*
Water	*Vai*
Land	*Fonoua*
Sea	*Sami*
Cloud	*Langi*
Wind	*Makangi*
North	*Foganou*
South	*Tonga*
East	*Koilao*
West	*Lae*
Glass beads	*Songui*
Knife	*Penna, from the English word Pen*
Axe	*Makao*
Big	*Lasi*
Small	*Kiki*
Good	*Lete*
Bad	*Covi*
Men	*Tangata*
Woman	*Vefini*
Come here	*Sole, Sania, Ataoho*
Go away	*Alouia*
One	*Tas*
Two	*Loua*
Three	*Tolou*
Four	*Fa*
Five	*Lima*, etc.

It was in 1834 or 35 that the English missionaries came and settled in the Samoa archipelago. Before their arrival, the natives did not practice any religion; they were not known to have either temples, prayers or religious ceremonies. The only practices sanctioned

by time-honoured use, were the *Tabou*, called *Sa*, *Kava* and *Circumcision*. Their combat weapons were spears, slings, clubs and they did not use either bows or arrows. They already had a few muskets, brought by the whalers and deserters.

It would seem that in the past the whole of the Samoa archipelago recognised one paramount chief; but this unity had already ceased to exist when I visited these islands and all the land was divided into districts, each governed by a single chief, or arii.

One of the Samoa islands, Tou-tou-ila, was the scene of the massacre of Captain de Langle, who had been part of Lapeyrouse's expedition. A sentiment you no doubt share prompted me to collect the woeful memories of this catastrophe and, on the first day we landed, I questioned the Englishmen who were acting as our guides on the subject. They told me that several of poor de Langle's companions had been spared by the natives and even that one of them was still alive and dwelling on one of the eastern islands with his wife and children. The reason which deprived Lapeyrouse of his second in command is unknown. The natives attribute it to attempted theft by one of their number aboard one of the pinnaces. This attempt was put down by force and led to a general clash in which de Langle and some of his men were massacred. But when one thinks of all the scenes of carnage which covered the first age of discovery in Oceania with blood, one cannot but help thinking that the massacre of our compatriots was doubtless the result of some misunderstanding because the navigators of this era knew nothing of these peoples' habits and customs; they were all too often ready to take them for blood-tainted cannibals.

According to the information provided by our guides, Captain How and I soon considered that we could safely venture as far as the large village of *Fale-ata*; this we did while entertaining ourselves by shooting wood-pigeons and turtle-doves, which live in droves in these forests. *Falé-ata* village lies on a vast esplanade; a large green occupies the centre and the huts, placed at regular intervals around it, have a comfortable look to them not to be found in those of Apia.

On arrival we were received by the chief of the village who eagerly took us into his hut where he had coconuts served us to slake our thirst. Our attention was soon drawn to a fine, large canoe, not less than 35 feet long, and which was carefully sheltered in an open shed next to the chief's house. We asked him what means he used to transport this boat to the sea, which was at least a mile away, and he gave us to understand that the combined strength of his subjects was his only resource and that men carried the boat on their backs. We acknowledged the generous hospitality showed to us by offering a few trifles for which the Samoan chief showed his gratitude by lifting them above his head and bowing slightly. But what seemed to delight him above all was the gift I made him of a little piece of tin which he immediately used to fill the pipe that never left his mouth. Indeed the natives of this island are particularly fond of tobacco, as can be seen from the large number of these plants growing around all the huts. The chief also asked us for *Souma-mea-Houni*, that is to say porcelain blue glass beads, the size of a finger tip, which at the time were greatly sought after in these islands, where each large bead was worth no less than 5 francs of our currency. We negotiated several remarkably fat hogs with him for 6 to 8 beads each. But when we gave it to be understood that we had quite a large amount of these precious beads on board, a shudder seemed to go through the assembled crowd and the men immediately sent the children to tell their families to bring on board all the provisions we might need. The chief, I will admit to his shame, went so far as to offer two of his daughters and added that, for a few of these beads, there was not one of our sailors who would be unable to find a wife on the island.

We then bade farewell to our Samoan chief; but before separating, we walked all through Fale-ata village with him, and even went into several huts, which were all remarkable for their cleanness and elegance of construction. Inside, the floor, carefully paved with stones, was covered with beautifully woven mats and pieces of painted tapa used as rugs or blankets.

The roof, made of coconut palm leaves, was supported by pillars 5 or 6 feet high. The outside walls consisted of an attractive bamboo or reed lattice-work, the chinks being covered by palm leaves or mats.

In one of the huts we visited, we found a native whose legs, afflicted with elephantiasis, were the size of tree-trunks; he was entertaining himself by playing the flute, but not at all in the manner of our Tulou and Dorus; the mouthpiece of his instrument, which was at least 16 to 18 inches long, was placed in his nostril; the sound he thus produced was muted and we did not much care for the harmony. So we beat a hasty retreat, very sorry to have momentarily interrupted this noble savage in his musical pastime. About a mile from Fale-ata, our interest was aroused by several little round open sheds grouped together on a plateau where the ground, levelled and covered with sand, was tended with great care. We were looking at the Fia-tou-ka or the village cemetery. Our guides informed us that each of these sheds covered a tomb.

The Samoans are, in general, tall and good-looking; but they soon lose this vigorous appearance which distinguishes the Marquesan natives from the Tongans ; for obesity is very common amongst them. They have aquiline rather than flat noses, high cheekbones and eyes slightly slit at the side, as soon as they have reached the age of thirty. The women are small and well-built; some of them are even very beautiful, but nearly all their faces lack character.

These islanders wear their hair very long, sometimes using leaves or coconut palm bark to tie it up on top of their heads. Their straight thick hair, more dirty brown than black, is slightly wavy like that of half-castes. The women have shaved heads, or at least very short hair, and I have seen none who leave a lock on the left side of their head as they do in Tongatabou.

The men's clothing consists of a girdle of aquatic leaves round the loins which is not inelegant. They are tattoed from the navel to half-way down the thighs; this very dense tattoo stands out well on their almost black skin and makes them look a bit like the Sepoys of India, dressed in their knee-breeches.

Unlike men's, women's tattoos do not always cover the same part of the body; they are tattooed here and there, so to speak, on their arms, breasts and legs; they also burn their skin which leaves little round, white marks. They are moreover slightly more clothed than the men and they usually wrap themselves in a piece of tapa cloth, which their coquetry uses to quite good advantage.

The adornments of both sexes consist of diadems, necklaces of shells and of fish or sperm-whale teeth and bracelets made of rings from a particular type of shell with bright red stripes. I leave aside a host of other objects whose enumeration would be of limited interest.

Although the Samoans are happy to give themselves up to the idleness so pleasurable in such a scorching climate, they cannot but occupy quite an important place among the nations of Oceania. Their canoes, all inlayed with mother of pearl and decorated with white shells called *Leda's eggs*, whose elegant shape resembles that of the dorado are veritable masterpieces of nautical architecture; they are paddled and when they are sailed outriggers support them and prevent them capsizing. Among the utensils used in this archipelago, the most remarkable are the vessels used for kava. The latter are made from a single piece of wood and show a workmanship in no way inferior to that our European craftsmen who have sharp tools. Amongst other products of Samoan manufacture, I will also mention the pillows in the form of little benches, carved with exquisite skill, as well as the perfectly woven nets and the tortoiseshell fish-hooks whose mother of pearl backs imitate the flying fish to the life. The line and nets are made from a kind of hemp which can hold its own in comparison with that of Europe. I was not able to obtain the plant which produces it; but I am presenting to the Society a line and its hook which I brought back from these islands.

I do not doubt that this hemp will one day be able to become an important article of trade, like the *phormium tenax* of New Zealand.

After having exhausted the provisioning resources afforded us by the port of Apia, we set sail and, following the north-west coast of Opoulou island, sailed between the two little islands of Apolina and Manono and the south-east tip of Sevay. We sighted a very dangerous reef in this channel and having left it to starboard, we stood off a creek on the island of Sevay, in the southern part of this island.

Here we witnessed a truly amazing sight : all along the coast, for over three miles, the sea flowed into madreporic caves; and, finding an exit through natural vents, 200 feet from the coast, it soared high up towards the sky, in thousands of columns, placed by some admirable trick of nature at approximately equal distances apart. From our canoe we could see these immense jets of water gleaming like saphires, rubies and emeralds in the rays of the sun. Luminous arches, the colours of the prism, leaped between each column forming huge porticos, veiled in a light, transparent mist, which disappeared imperceptibly wafted gently away in the morning breeze. No, nothing can compare with this splendid show and, in the presence of these prodigious effects of the elements, reproduced at the backwash of every wave and framed by picturesque and imposing scenery, I thought, despite myself, of the weakness of human genius when it attempts to imitate the powerful creations of the great architect of the universe.

Tearing myself away from this wonderful sight, with two whale-boats I headed for the creek where up until then everything had seemed quiet and peaceful; but the shore was soon covered in natives running here and there; and soon afterwards, just above the water, we saw the tanned heads of more than 200 women, young and old, who were swimming out to us. We had the utmost difficulty defending ourselves against the invasion of these mermaids who showed great curiosity with respect to us. The men were not long in surrounding us as well, either swimming or in their canoes, and almost forced us to resort to violent means in order to prevent them coming aboard our boats. Prudence required us to act thus as the savages' perfidiousness, when motivated by greed, often exceeds anything the most refined civilisation can invent and it was to be feared that they would capsize our boats in order to overpower us more easily.

Among all the Samoans importuning us, I noticed an old chief whom the undertow of the sea had prevented from launching his canoe and who had been swimming around us for a long time with quite extraordinary agility; his companions showed him great deference and he was followed by a young man who cleaved through the water with a gracefulness and ease which reminded me of the mythological Tritons.

This young man begged me so insistently to be allowed on board among us with the old chief he was escorting, that I was prepared to make an exception to the general rule on his behalf. Hardly more than an adolescent, the muscles of his body were not yet fully developed; but his poised stature and handsome build, whose admirable proportions could have served as a model for a sculptor, made him stand out from the rest. His thick, shiny brown hair was carefully frizzed and pulled up on top of his head, uncovering a wide forehead indicative of intelligence. His clothing consisted of the girdle of leaves I have already mentioned and a graceful tattoo decorating part of his body from the waist to half way down his thighs; this portrayed principally the shape of a shark, meant, I think, to recall a victory over their dangerous enemy. The expression on his face was still soft and ingenuous and his skin, of a light, tanned yellow colour, was much like that of a half-caste from our colonies.

As for the old chief, he was a man of about fifty to fifty-five years of age, tall and bony, with nothing about him, in our eyes, to distinguish him from the other natives.

As we were heading back to our ship, there was suddenly great agitation among the savages; some jumped into their canoes, others hurried towards the beach, pushing the young girls and

men before them. I soon learnt that all this commotion was caused by a shark whose trail some of the natives were trying to follow in a boat. The means they used to capture it deserves to be recounted. A fish's jawbone attached to a line was thrown into the sea to attract the animal and one of the savages started to violently stir up the water with one of his legs previously rubbed with coconut oil. Not a minute had passed before the shark was rushing to seize the bait and swimming into a skilfully prepared noose. The Samoans then easily overcame it and, after tiring it for a long time, killed it with blows from their clubs.

On boarding the Lloyd, with the old chief and his companion, I found the captain who, as he was expecting me to lunch, took us down to the cabin; we then sat down to eat. Throughout the meal, our guests appeared quite at ease and behaved very properly. Meanwhile, our natives had been allowed on board; and when they were offered the remains of the chief's meal, I was surprised to notice they refused to touch them, as though they were sacred for them; they would not even drink from a coconut which had touched their arii's lips.

After lunch, my table companions examined the whole boat in detail and they paid particularly careful attention to the examination of the compass whose use I had a good deal of difficulty explaining to them; and what convinced me above all that they had never before seen Europeans was the effect a mirror had on them. Nothing could be stranger than the gestures of the old savage grimacing at the mirror, shaking his fist at it, laughing, getting angry, quite ready to hit the insolent creature who was making so free with him. As the mirror was hanging between two of the stern windows, he leant out of the ship to make sure there was nobody behind it.

We had to take down the mirror in order to make him understand its effect and calm his fury. I will not go into further details about this scene which has been described so many times by navigators.

Taking me aside a little later, the young Samoan intimated clearly to me that he wanted to join the ship in order to go to England to see the fine things. I replied, accompanying my pantomime with a few words I had learnt during my stay in these islands, that it was not up to me to grant his request and that for this he must ask the ship's captain. The latter, when consulted, refused, as was to be expected, and ostensibly justified his refusal by saying he could not take a native on board without the consent of the island's chief.

The savage was much vexed at the lack of success his request met with; for he had seemed to be hiding from the old chief when he asked me and a few tears I saw shining in his eyes, when he left us with his venerable companion, proved to me that in the Samoa Islands, as everywhere, there are men tourmented by an instinct to travel.

If I have not given an account of our transactions on the coast of Sevay, it is because I feared becoming repetitive for the Samoans' customs seemed to me much the same everywhere. I shall merely say that the inhabitants of Sevay proved to be a little bolder, particularly when we were on the border of two districts; we were then always obliged to go shorewards in two boats, one of which was armed for the purpose of controlling the natives. At Sevay, as at Opoulou, the blue glass beads were much sought after by the natives and were in fact, with pieces of tin, the only barterable articles. I shall add that an English brick from Port Jackson, the Venus, was unable to obtain a single pig for the numerous objects of exchange, ironmongery, household utensils and cloth which it had on board.

Two Englishmen, who had escaped, I believe, from Botany Bay, came out from Sevay and presented themselves aboard the Lloyd; but the captain would only keep them a very short time on board for fear they would cause part of the crew to desert. I learnt from them that the Samoan chiefs attached immense importance to these glass beads and that prisoners taken in war could buy their freedom with a necklace of twenty beads. These Englishmen confirmed the different pieces of information I had obtained at Apia, both about the population and the subdivision of the country into districts independent of each other. If they are to be believed,

the wars these natives waged amongst themselves were never very murderous, and prisoners always remained the chiefs' slaves. They told me that if the inhabitants preferred baubles to useful things, it was because the land, with its rich plantations of coconut palms, banana plants and root vegetables, provided them with an abundance of food and also enabled them to keep a large number of pigs. Indeed, the Samoa Islands, whose reefs abound with all kinds of fish, can produce all tropical foodstuffs and most European fruit would grow well on the mountain tops; and they are, moreover, a healthy place in which to stay and these Englishmen presented them to me as the Eldorado of Polynesia.

We had finished bartering and had already been three days on the south-west coast of Sevay, where we had completed our supplies, drifting towards the north-western tip of the island from which we intended to make our departure, when we sighted a boat paddling vigorously which seemed to be heading towards us. We put the ship on a beam reach to await it and soon the native in it was aboard our ship. There, holding up his two hands, whose little fingers were cut off at the first joint, he shouted several times: "*Tangata-Tonga*, man of Tonga". I questioned him and he informed me he was from a large double canoe which had left Tongata-Tabou two years ago and was trading in these archipelagoes. He pressed us to go ashore where, he said, we would be able to obtain abundant fresh provisions; but we did not deem it necessary to comply with his request. In any case, the ship had sufficient supplies; and continuing our course, we let the man from Tonga return alone to Sevay Island and the big double canoe which was coming out from the reefs, laden with more than fifty people.

Should we not admire the courage of these Polynesian navigators who, with no compass, throw themselves on the mercy of the winds, aboard such frail boats and for such long voyages, carrying on their double canoes up to a hundred people of both sexes?

In Tonga-Tabou I saw a canoe which had come from the Viti Islands with a crew of thirty individuals. This canoe had therefore covered a distance of almost 200 leagues, like the one we met in Sevay, for it was indeed a canoe from Tonga we had before us and the savage's mutilated hands were sufficient to betray his origin. You know, gentlemen, that most of the inhabitants of Tonga have the first two joints of their little fingers removed. They cut them off as a sign of suffering when they lose their chiefs or their relatives and mothers even have the barbarity, on the death of a revered chief, to perform the same cruel operation on their children with their teeth, the wound then being cauterized with live coals.

Before leaving this archipelago, I wish to submit a few reflections to you.

I have seen a lot, travelled a lot and I may be believed about the needs of our nationals abroad, needs which I have long studied and felt. May I be permitted first of all to pay a just tribute of praise to our sailors who have not contented themselves with efficiently protecting our compatriots overseas and who have also managed to create outlets for our trade, by helping to establish French trading posts in the most remote spots of the world.

The illustrious admiral who was supposed to be your president probably does not remember that twenty-years ago today, a young French sailor, sailing under a foreign flag in order to gain knowledge and bring useful information back to his fatherland, witnessed his noble efforts in favour of France's maritime trade. The hour has come, I believe, for this sailor to remind the admiral of what more important work has perhaps made him forget.

It is to Baron de Mackau that falls the honour of having founded the first French trading post in Spanish America, in that America which now alone takes more than half our exports of Parisian manufactured articles. The captain, who already combined the bravery and experience of the sailor with the prudent foresight of the statesman, had understood that Valparaiso was lacking a French establishment to whom our nation's ships could go. In a highly intelligent young man entrusted to his care in Rio-Janeiro he improvised an accomplished trader and with him set up on the shores of the Pacific Ocean a French trading post to which he first succeeded in giving prominence by putting it in charge of his division's

business. Soon this company's bills of exchange, endorsed by the Commander of the French fleet in these seas, were much sought after by the principal traders of Great Britain and the United States; and here, Mr de Mackau once more won our traders' gratitude by firmly establishing France's credibility in this South America which, until then, had seen almost only adventurers. This young trader was one of my compatriots and I was one of his first business partners.

The firm founded under the auspices of Mr de Mackau was the source from which all the French trading posts existing today stemmed, from California to the Chiloe Islands.

Before long, it must be hoped, steamers with propellers will come and connect our West Indes to France and to the Panama isthmus, whose two extremities will be brought closer by a railway which a French company proposes to build, the only feasible form of transport here to my mind. For, as the Society knows, I have dealt with this subject at length and sought to demonstrate that the San-Juan river and Lake Nicaragua, offered the only waterway possible; and, as you have heard today, gentlemen, my work tallies with what the worthy representative of France, your honourable president[3], has just told you on the same subject.

But whether the railway be an industrial concern profitable for those with an interest in it or not, it will nevertheless help to facilitate the journey and the transport of goods from one sea to the other, if only by a few days, given the length of the distances involved.

Then, with the help of new steamers in the Pacific ocean, our Polynesian establishments will be barely two months away from Paris and once again we shall owe this useful institution to the minister who today so wisely runs the naval forces of France. He will be able to maintain an impressive force of steamships for the use of the navy and also create a steamer network which will again save the state money, for the proceeds of the connection alone will cover the installation costs. But, I am not afraid to say it and I hope my voice will be heard, if you want our Polynesian establishments to be useful to our merchant navy, you must forge ahead and link them to Indo-China and Malaysia, by choosing good in-between posts; for, in isolation, what use can they be to us?

Let us then establish a trading post on one of the Samoa or Viti Islands; these two large archipelagoes control the whole of this chain of numberless islands, the Friendly Islands, the New Hebrides, the Solomons, New Ireland, Radic and Ralich.

The Viti or Fiji Islands can provide very profitable fishing for sea-slugs and tortoiseshell, as well as sandalwood, superb construction timber, and later, other tropical produce. If you do not want further contact with Mr Pritchard, who I am told has been appointed Great Britain's consul to these islands, and if you believe that from Tahiti and Nouka-Hiva we can protect our trade, let us continue without stopping as far as the Philippines; but there, we need a port of call.

The English have taken several ports on the coasts of China: let us not settle too near them. Since our Polynesian possessions are in the southern hemisphere and on the southern route to Malaysia and India, let us stop at Mindanao; this is one of the large islands in the Philippines. Spain only possesses three very limited provinces on this big land: Misamis, Caraga and Samboanga. All the rest belongs to the islamic Malaysians with whom it would be easy to negotiate a spot on a river, for there are some fine ones flowing down into the great bay of Mindanao. This island is magnificent; its produce is admirable and it controls the Moluccas sea.

Are we afraid that our occupation of Mindanao might annoy our neighbours? In that case, let us settle on an island in the Sanguir or Tulour archipelagoes; on one in those of Solou or Holo, of Tawi-Tawi. Let us choose Basilan, so well-placed; finally, let us found an establishment in the Balabac strait, on Balabac itself, in the centre of the strait; on Palawan, or on Baslanbangan or Sangey, islands situated off the northern tip of Borneo. There we shall

[3] Mr Cochelet, former chargé d'affaires in Mexico and Egypt.

control the passage of ships going to China, against the monsoon, along the north-west coast of Borneo, or going back and forth through the Macassar strait. There, we shall do considerable trade with all the archipelagoes, with China, the Philippines, Batavia and Singapore. These reflections are in accordance with the ideas of the present minister of trade, the honourable Mr Cunin-Gridaine who, when presiding over your meeting, expressed his pleasure to see the Society take an interest in commercial issues. He has proved to you, with flattering tokens of esteem, that he is willing to put all his efforts into helping it.

Let us therefore follow the route he has mapped out for us, by enlightening the voyaging traders who travel the length and breadth of these remote regions for mercantile purposes or for the common good; because we must not forget that it is trade which provides the courage and the perseverance necessary for creating relations between nations. But I see it is time to end, if I do not wish to broach a subject which is outside my scope and which it is not for me to discuss here. I conclude by asking the Society to forgive me for this little digression; but, as its members know, my interests are in commercial geography and I leave more scholarly research to my more learned colleagues.

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