

pleased to see a promise written down, there being to their untutored minds a something sacred and solemnly binding connected with the operation. (How beautiful is their simplicity! and how expanded would their views become upon this point, could they but comprehend the sublime nonchalance with which many of the sons of civilization append their signatures to "a bit of stiff," without the slightest consideration as to the entirely hypothetical nature of the chances of their being able to meet the liability incurred by the said process.) Here follows a verbatim translation of a memorandum of this kind between one "Ururoa" (*i.e.*, Longbeard, a white man known to the natives by that name, as Polynesians generally invent a soubriquet from some physical peculiarity for any European whom they may happen to have dealings with), and certain people of Nukunivano:—

"We, men and women of Nukunivano, whose marks are put at the bottom of this paper, agree to go with the Captain Longbeard to the island of 'Gannet Cay,' and to fish for beche-de-mer for six moons, and to be paid, each man or woman, 14 fathoms of calico or 21 plugs of tobacco per moon, or other things as we like, such as knives and needles, at a value as we have before agreed; and at the end of six moons to be returned to our home, if the wind should be fair for us to come back at that time. The chief, whose name is Dogfish, shall superintend the work. The Captain Longbeard shall tell the chief Dogfish what the people are to do, and Dogfish shall tell the people. The Captain Longbeard shall not beat any of the people. The people shall not fight among themselves, but if there be any quarrel among them, they shall refer it to the Captain Longbeard and to the chief Dogfish. If any one of the people die, that which is due to him or her shall be intrusted to the chief Dogfish, to be given to his or her family. The Captain Longbeard shall supply to all the people, for nothing, lines and fish-hooks, that they may catch themselves food. All food and fresh water shall be taken charge of and fairly divided by the chief Dogfish. Twenty-eight days shall count for one moon; out of each moon shall be four days' rest—that is to say, the people shall work six days, and on the seventh day they shall do no work. They shall not lie to the chief Dogfish, or be lazy, sulky, or dissatisfied. There is no more to say." Here follow the names of the people's marks, each against their own. And, as a general rule, they have a good time of it; they live together like one family, and part good friends.

The poor barbarians are good-tempered, generous even to folly, and ready at any time to encounter the most deadly perils in the service of white men who treat them with kindness and liberality. Very many there are of us who have been indebted for our lives to their loving-kindness and unselfish bravery,

Through days of danger and ways of fear,

starving upon desert cays, lost upon lonely seas, running with a rag of sail before furious winds, tossed in the foam of breakers where the sharks are jostling one another. Talking not long ago to a gentleman who has a morbid antipathy to Maoris, of whatsoever tribe and lineage, and would have them exterminated as noxious vermin, I remarked, "Be assured my friend, had you known as many kind women and brave men as I have done in the islands of the great South Sea, you would not wish to see them civilized off the face of the earth."

As concerns life in a beche-de-mer camp, it is characterized by a sameness which amounts to monotony, and would be wearisome to many minds. Let us take, for instance, the incidents of one day on some desert isle like Gaspar Rico, Peregrino, or Palmerston. Beginning with the dark hour just before the dawn, the stars are shining with an intense brilliancy, reflected on the steel-bright surface of the calm lagoon. The sandy pathways seem like snow. The heavy forest of towering palms and banyans, interlocked with trailing vines, assumes weird and fantastic shapes, and shows a black outline against the clear blue sky; under their dark shadows twinkle innumerable points of light—the lamps of great glow-worms and luminous grubs. The trade wind moans among the forest leaves, and mingles its music with the hollow roar of the surf that rolls upon the coral reef. There are sounds of life, too, in the sombre shades—a sound from time to time as of blows with a pick-axe. In such a spot one might imagine it to be pirates who delve for hidden treasure, or murderers digging graves; but it is the "knovin," the "uguale" (the great land-crab of the desert isles)—he is breaking a cocoa-nut for his morning meal. When the gray dawn glimmers in the east, the sea-birds flap their wings, and cry to one another from the lofty boughs. As the light increases, they quit their roosts, and fly away to seek their living on the sea. They go swiftly and in long lines dead to windward, for they know when they return they will be weary and loaded with fish for their young ones, so they will want a fair wind home. Presently evidences of human existence become apparent in the solitude. Amongst a little cluster of palm-leaf huts breaks forth a gabbling of tongues, and dusky figures carrying glowing firebrands pass from one dwelling to another. Men in the costume of the Grecian statues, and women half-covered by their hair, trot down the sandy pathways to bathe in the cold lagoon. They meet others by the way, and exchange civilities: "Tena korua!" "Eeki ouli kaina;" "Aere korua ki tai mo!" "Eeki, aere maua." They make no remarks about the weather; it is not their habit, the seasons undergo so little change in these blessed latitudes. When the glorious sun rises over the dimpled sea and lights up the woodland with his golden beams, there is a sound of axes in the forest, the men are cutting logs to keep up the fires beneath the smoking fish. Then the women uncover the Maori ovens and spread out the "kai," rolled up in palm leaves and nicely done brown; fishes of all sorts, and fat cockles, and gannet's eggs, and perhaps a great turtle baked in his armour, and huge land crabs, and roasted nuts, and many other good things. And when all have eaten, they stow away what remains, and wash up the dishes while the men collect their gear—knives, and baskets, and fish-spears, and lines, and gourds of water. One or two remain at home to watch the smoking, and by the time the sun is level with the crowns of the palms, the rest launch the boat, and spread the tall brown sail, and steer for some distant cay or coral shoal, where they spend the day in light labour, which is to them mere sport, tumbling about like Nereids in the clear cool water, wandering about upon the mossy reef, laughing and skylarking as they gather the slimy slug and spear the fish among the stones; until early in the afternoon, when they return to their little settlement, where some clean and cook the beche-de-mer, while the rest go to providing food. And by the time they get their suppers it is night; then they make fires, and spread mats beside them, and lie down and tell tales of phantom ships, and of ghosts and tupakos, and of impossible adventures and voyages to wonderful islands, and they sing songs, and the musicians play upon a Pandean pipes and a