

ISLANDERS ON THE SEA

From Samoa To Hawaii In Canoes in 1192.

MYSTERY OF NAVIGATION

Natives' Primitive Charts the Secrets of Which are Rigidly Preserved.

Far in the South seas where the ships of civilization touch only incidentally lives a people who may fairly be called the most intrepid mariners in history, says the Washington Star. Living ever within sight and sound of the sea, they have come to forget mankind's instinctive fear of it. They swim almost as naturally as they walk. In their frail-looking but scientifically constructed boats they make voyages such as to stagger belief, voyages that cover thousands of miles of ocean. In long centuries of sea-following they have evolved a science of navigation incomprehensible to us, but, judging from its results, perfected to a high degree. Their history is full of long ocean wanderings in which whole fleets took part, and these accounts cannot be brushed aside as myths, for there is ample evidence to support them. Today the little craft make their way confidently through the perilous seas where the occasional foreign ship with all the equipment of science goes with fear and trembling.

All the South Sea Islanders are wonderful navigators, but at the present time the inhabitants of the Marshall Islands bear the palm for skill and daring. Their type of craft is an unequal catamaran, one hull being much smaller than the other. This small hull is on the port side and is connected with the main boat by a sort of platform, securely lashed. It serves to keep the boat from overturning and also to hold it to the windward when tacking, for these craft make their way against the wind. The sail is like our familiar leg-of-mutton sail, the gaff, however, being curved and running almost perpendicular to the deck. The mast is stepped amidships and can be easily unstepped. Steering is done with a paddle. In a large boat many paddles are carried for use in case of gales so severe as to render the sails useless.

HOW THEY NAVIGATE.

No Marshall Island ship would venture on a long voyage without its star gazer, chart reader and navigator. The navigator has charge of the handling of the ship; he is the executive officer. If it is a chief's boat the chief himself is in command, but he must be guided by the directions of the chart reader and the star gazer, who are the most important persons aboard. Between them they map out the course, determining it from the stars, the chart, the currents and the movements of fishes and birds.

Mr. Brigham of the Bishop Museum is authority for saying that formerly the Polynesian Islander had a rude compass, for they made frameworks of sticks, looking for all the world like complicated kite frames, which were kept in possession of the craft called "Makaalawa," or astronomers. These frames were the compasses of the South sea sailors. Set on the bow of the canoe and oriented correctly, they plainly told the pilot how to steer. Little is known as to the construction of them. Nowadays the islanders can get the mariner's compass and maps and charts of European make. In the more remote parts, however, they still depend upon the old charts, which are perhaps the most curious specimens of cartography extant.

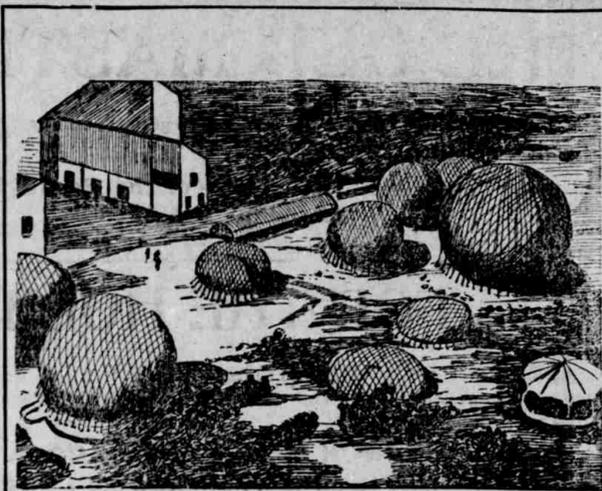
These charts are made of splints of cane tied together, and at intervals little shells are attached. At first view the impression is that the shells stand for the islands, but their meaning is far more subtle. The trade winds and the ocean currents move with great steadiness in the equatorial region. If you were sitting in a low canoe and had trained nautical ears you would hear a ripple against one side of your craft, but not on the other, and this would declare your course.

But, further, when this steady, moving ocean current strikes the shallow water it is arrested in front of an island, but moves on past the ends, making a curve in the ripple. Each island makes its own curves and when these curves meet there are cross lines of ripples resembling the pattern on the back of the watch. These are called "dunungs," and shells are tied at these points on the stick charts, as buoys are marked by the lighthouse board of the hydrographic office.

SECRETS RIGIDLY PRESERVED.

Capt. Winkler of the German navy, who assiduously studied the Marshall Island charts for years and who was intimate with Chief Lofak, says that the greatest secrecy is observed about the use of these charts. There is no coast survey or hydrographic office to furnish copies for a few cents to any navigator. If there were, some fine morning the chief might rise up and find a lot of his canoes and people gone. The extreme mystery has always prevailed concerning them and only selected persons are trained in their use. Captain Winkler says that generally a whole people undertook a journey under guidance of the chief and his pilot in a flotilla consisting of from 25 to 30 canoes. One canoe was pilot boat and the expert navigators all gathered on this one, the others following in line. The man on watch had to sing while on duty so that the others might know that he was not asleep. Thus the fleet would make its way along the highways or trails from one archipelago to another, far out of sight of all land, for many days at a time, but always knowing their location.

About the year 1192 one Paao, a celebrated navigator, astrologer and priest in the Island of Samoa, conducted a company from that island to Hawaii in a large, open, double canoe, without



AERO CLUB PARK AS SEEN FROM BALLOON.

This odd looking picture is not a field of huge mushrooms. It is the reproduction of a photograph, taken from a captive balloon, of the Aero Club Park, near Paris. The picture was taken just prior to the start in the recent balloon competition. A prize was offered, open only to veteran aeronauts, the points upon which it was to be awarded being the distance traveled and the duration of a continuous voyage in the air. The prize was won by the Centaure, a balloon of 1,616 metres capacity, which landed, after a voyage of 35 hours and 35 minutes, at a point in Russia, 1,304 miles distant from the starting place. The largest balloon entered in the competition was the St. Louis, with a capacity of 3,000 metres.

decks. He had no compass, his sails were of the most primitive kind and a large part of the time the crew were compelled to use their paddles. In 1492 Columbus made the voyage from the Canaries to America in well-built vessels with decks, using the mariner's compass. He missed South America, sailed almost twice as far as was necessary and landed on San Salvador, now Watling's Island. The distance from the Canary Islands to South America is about the same as that from Hawaii to Samoa, that is, not far from 2,500 miles. On this showing Paao seems to have been quite as adventurous and successful an explorer as Columbus. How in the world he could have started on such an undertaking with any assurance of success has troubled the minds of students of Polynesian life for many years. Dr. N. B. Emerson says that Paao was in possession of his unspoiled senses—and that means a great deal. Paao met in Hawaii his own Polynesian kindred, whose ancestors must have sailed over the same track; but all memory of their journeys is lost.

It is not quite certain whether Paao's canoe was a dugout or a built-up craft. The Hawaiian type is shown in the picture of Queen Kaiulani's pleasure yacht, now in the United States National Museum. It is a dugout, with outrigger. A built-up form would resemble the Marshall Islanders' canoe; but the principle is the same, the object being to enable the navigator to keep his vessel upright in the ocean and to go against the wind.

VOYAGE OF THE "SWARM-OF-FLIES."

Paao's voyage was begun under unfavorable auspices. One day Paao's brother accused Paao, Jr., of stealing fruit. The father killed the boy then and there, in the presence of the uncle, cut him open, and finding no fruit in his stomach, was crazed with rage. Did he murder his brother? No, that is not the Polynesian fashion of showing anger. He made up his mind to get as far away from Samoa as wind and water would carry him. To this end he constructed a large double canoe and just as it was finished an incident occurred which hastened his departure. Seeing the son of his brother drumming offensively on the new canoe, Paao killed him, sacrificed his body to the god of canoes and buried it in the sand underneath. Soon after this the father, hunting for his son, came upon the new canoe. While admiring her fine lines he noticed a swarm of flies about a block of wood. Removing this he discovered the body of his son. So he named the canoe "Swarm-of-Flies" in contempt.

"Swarm-of-Flies" was one of the large, sea-going, double canoes, in which the two hulls are held at a certain distance apart and parallel to each other by three cross-pieces called iakas. All the joining on the craft was done, not with nails and pegs, but with scunt, braided cord made from the husks of the coconut fruit. The hulls were covered with deck mats fore and aft to keep off the waves. She was rigged with a shifting mast and triangular sail of plaited pandanus leaves. The mast and sail were so set that in stormy or rough weather they could be unshipped, folded together and lashed to the iakas, or cross-pieces. And then Paao and his crew had to depend upon their paddles. "Swarm-of-Flies" had seats for forty paddlemen sitting two on a bench. A raised platform in the middle of the canoe was walled and roofed with mats and that was the captain's quarters. The voyage of "Swarm-of-Flies" is said to have been disagreeable, owing to the winds and storms raised by Paao's brother. But what is most wonderful in this connection is that the canoe was accompanied, guided and protected by a school of fishes.

OTHER SOUTH SEA VOYAGERS.

Among other navigators of this period were Paumakua and Kaula, who visited every land known to the ancients, the former bringing back to Hawaii from a distant region two white men. One of the most famous of these navigators was Moikeha, who figures as a great explorer. With his brother he sailed to the Marquesas, but there a quarrel arose and with true Polynesian instinct Moikeha picked himself up and returned to Hawaii for spite. The distance traveled could not have been less than 5,000 miles. His son, Kila, when a boy, made a canoe of bulrushes, in which he explored the Wallua river; he was also an expert surf rider and was taught geography, navigation and astronomy. Arrived at manhood he became a great sailor and made the round trip between Hawaii and Tahiti, traveling about 5,000 miles over seas. These old navigators had gotten so far in the economy of long voyages as to have devised a perfectly seaworthy craft, built to hold from two to fifty persons each and admirably rigged for sailing. Dried breadfruit and other desiccated foods were economical rations for long voyages.

Not all these journeys were successful. There are melancholy traditions in the Islands telling of tribal expeditions which set out and were never again

heard of; victims probably to the furious hurricanes of the Pacific. Nor have all the more modern voyages turned out well. In 1830 a Marshall Island flotilla of 100 canoes set out and all save one were destroyed. As late as 1860 a fleet of thirty-five canoes sailed from Jaluit, but was heard from no more. Doubtless these brave and venturesome mariners have paid as heavy a price in human life as any of the civilized races whose explorations have broadened the world.

THE BEST OF LIFE.

Not till life's heat is cooled,
The heading rush slowed to a quiet pace,
And every purbled passion that has ruled
Our noisier years at last
Spurs us in vain, and weary of the race,
We care no more who loses or who wins—
Ah! not till all the best of life seems past
The best of life begins.

To toil for only fame,
Handclappings and the fickle gusts of praise,
For place or power or gold to gild a name
Above the grave whereto
All paths will bring us, were to lose our days—
We, on whose ears youth's passing bell has tolled—
In blowing bubbles, even as children do,
Forgetting we grow old.

But the world widens when
Such hope of trivial gain that ruled as lies
Broken among our childhood's toys:
We win to self-control!
And mail ourselves in manhood, and there rise
Upon us from the vast and windless height
Those clearer thoughts that are unto the soul
What stars are to the night.
—The Spectator.

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