

Under the Spell of the Kahuna

THE Kahunas are casting strange spells over Hawaii. It was thought that annexation would crush the power of the kahuna, as the native witch doctor is called. But the new condition of affairs has only driven the kahuna to action.

Several prominent natives have recently met with mysterious and sudden deaths. They were all men who openly favored annexation. They were all warned by the witch doctors that they were doomed.

Only the other day Daniel Naone, a native in sympathy with the new government, passed away under peculiar circumstances.

"Prayed to death" by the kahunas, say the "annexation" natives.

"Poisoned by the kahunas," say the foreigners.

"Pooh!" say the "national native" party. The "national" natives are those who chafe under the new regime. They have resorted to the kahunas as a last resort to bring about a change. Naturally they are not anxious for an investigation of Naone's death, and claim that he died naturally.

But the island authorities are determined to investigate into these sudden and peculiar deaths. The "carpetbaggers," as the politicians who have recently settled in Hawaii are called, are particularly nettled. They flocked to Honolulu without a cent in their pockets, settled down on assurance, and as the months rolled by gathered in some juicy plums from the island political pie. The "carpetbaggers" have resorted to the usual crafty tactics to capture these same plums. All of which has at last aroused the dyed-in-the-wool conservative native, and in the emergency he has evoked the aid of the mysterious kahuna.

How well the kahunas have done their work the recent death roll and the thoroughly intimidated natives attest.

The kahuna is a witch doctor, a juggler of potions, a singer of incantations, of graybeard who mixes shivery spells, a fellow who gathers lethal herbs from graves in the crescent of the moon, an owlish individual who hoodoos cattle and removes malignant influences for 5 cents. He wouldn't rank very high in this country, and it is doubtful if a hustling kahuna could make a living here even by advertising. But in Hawaii, among the superstitious natives, whatever he says goes.

The unquenchable natives believe that a kahuna through his mysterious spells can put a hoodoo on a man that will rigorously last through seven generations; so when a kahuna tells a native voter to vote for a certain man or with a certain party that native voter firmly believes he will be forever damned unless he obeys implicitly. Add that's the new kind of power the enterprising kahuna is wielding in his native land under the up-to-date kind of American politics as played here. Is it any wonder, then, that a roar of protest went up from the "carpetbaggers" when it was noted about that the "national natives" had called out these kahuna reserves to meet the tricks and ballot devices of their resourceful opponents.

On top of all the charges and counter-charges came the sensation over Naone's

death. Naone was a prominent native; he belonged to what is called the "advanced party," and was developing suspicious tendencies to affiliate with what the conservative natives termed in their new political lingo "rank outsiders." Those same rank outsiders had shrewdly conceived that to capture a necessary part of the Hawaiian native vote it would be good politics to gather a number of the most prominent Hawaiians into their fold and give them a certain amount of patronage. They figured that the "laudible" native voters would follow these native leaders. Naone, it is said, was only one of this number. The native party saw this defection with resentment and apprehension. Those who watched the contest declare that the call to the kahunas was the move made by the conservatives to block it. The kahunas are among the most staunch and loyal lovers of their native land. If there is any Kanaka who foots the bill and sits in his old-time institutions and life, or any native who would die defending Hawaii for the Hawaiians, it is the kahuna. This isn't strange when it is understood that their very profession and living is bound up in the superstitious awe of the natives for the Hawaii of Kamehameha. And so it is that any native leader or native party that is working or plotting to preserve "old Hawaii" can always rely on the kahunas for staunch and ready support.

Naone's death is a rare one to furnish crimonations and recriminations between two parties at loggerheads over such a state of things. As far as is known, nothing particular in the way of illness was the matter with him up to the time he was accosted on the street by a kahuna. That was about the middle of last December.

"Oh, ho, stubborn Naone," said the witch doctor, as a parting shot to the man who refused to desert the advanced party. "I see a red devil sitting on your right shoulder; he is grinning and pointing to the moon, which means that inside of a month you will die. Forswear this new party and stand by old Hawaii, or beware."

Naone had embraced Christianity and was a man of great personal courage, but in spite of his years and his knowledge in his new faith, in spite of his confidence in his new political allies, he shivered at the old soothsayer's warning. Pagans, so scientists say, though other religions wean them from the worship of their forefathers, always return to the home gods of their ancestors when in dire extremities. Beneath Naone's dark skin, in spite of modern culture and a new religion, flowed his Kanaka blood and he was as keenly alive to the sayings of a grisly old Kahuna as was his grandfather, who recklessly paddled naked through the beach comb.

The evidence in the case as gathered by the "carpet baggers" shows that he must have been very seriously affected by the "witch doctor's" words, for although he was in excellent health when he heard them, within a week he took to his bed, complaining that he did not feel well; that some way or other he had an impression that his right side was becoming paralyzed. This was the side indicated by the red devil sitting.

Naone's friends gave him some sound

practical advice and called in a hard-headed old physician who wasn't afraid of the spells and incantations of an island full of kahunas. The doctor tackled his job with zest, for he felt it was a test case of the modern medical profession against the oldtime witchcraft of the kahuna. In three days he had Naone up and around and in such a cheerful frame of mind that he laughed at the idea of such a strong, robust man as himself ever becoming paralyzed.

Naone was leaving his house for his office next morning when on the threshold he almost bumped into the imperturbable kahuna, who was evidently lying in wait for him. "Ah, stubborn Naone," said the old sorcerer, shaking his withered hands at him. "Still my old eyes see the red devil sitting there on your shoulder; he has taken another grip and he shouts: 'Naone's days are shortening. Within two weeks he will be mine!' Return, oh, foolish man, return to the party of your fathers, ere it is too late."

At these words the ill-fated man staggered as though struck a heavy blow. He grasped the balustrade and steadied himself. Then with a low groan he turned and re-entered the house. The kahuna followed him unchecked. What took place within the privacy of Naone's room no man knows, but when the kahuna left the stricken man had possession of some new medicine in a small vial. This vial was discovered under his pillow when about half of it was taken. The trained nurse insistently bore it over to the doctor

despite the tears and assertions of Naone that it was the only medicine that would save him.

From the moment he was deprived of the contents of the kahuna's vial Naone seemed to give up all hope and sank rapidly. He bore no evidences of any recovery; his life seemed simply to flicker out and he died within three weeks of the first warning.

The political results of Naone's death are what might have been expected. The natives watched the case with awe, for Naone's course in politics and his defiance of the order of the kahuna was known to all his countrymen. Almost before the last breath left his distraught body the report was buzzed about the native quarters that "the red devil has got Naone, as the kahuna warned." And now the superstitions among the Kanaka voters are firmly convinced that Naone's death is a sign from the ancient gods that the only way to escape the clutch of the red devil is to vote as the kahuna tells you.

Charges of foul play are being bandied thick and fast over Naone's sudden demise. The natives possess recipes for making vegetable poisons which were in days gone by administered by certain kahunas or their creatures to those they wanted out of the way. In the forthcoming investigation of his death by the authorities some of his friends will try to prove that if the kahuna did not directly use some form of poison in the medicine given him he "prayed him to death," a threat much resorted to by witch doctors

when trying to influence superstitious natives.

Those who are versed in native ways and beliefs declare that it doesn't make any difference what kind of findings the

inquest returns. According to them, the superstitious among the natives are already fully convinced that Naone was given to the red devil for not doing as the kahuna told him, and that settles

the votes and everything else hanging on the matter.

It is the power of the kahuna pitted against modern skepticism. At present the kahuna is certainly holding his own.



Demoniacal Orgies and Weird Rites

PROFESSOR ROBERT T. HILL, the famous Government explorer, has just returned to Washington with a gruesome story from Hayti, where he had the remarkable privilege of witnessing a voodoo ceremonial—one of those demoniacal orgies which on that island celebrate the worship of the Great Yellow Serpent. This serpent, represented at the festivals of the devil's cult by a harmless native species of snake, is supposed to be an incarnation of the arch fiend himself, possessing all knowledge, but approachable only through his priests and priestesses—the watchers at the shrine of Obeah, who is otherwise known as Ju-Ju, Mumbo-Jumbo or Vaudoux, the last of these names being commonly corrupted into Voodoo.

"Cannibalism is a conspicuous feature of these rites," said Professor Hill. "It is unquestionable a fact that large numbers

of young children are offered up annually in Hayti as sacrifices to the Great Yellow Snake. Indeed, it is known that mothers frequently dedicate their infants at birth to this purpose, the fatal ceremony being postponed ordinarily until the victim has reached the age of 2 years. Invariably the ritual winds up with a feast, the details of which are too horrible to be described. Only when human prey is not obtainable is a black goat, which must have a white spot on it, or a white cock used as a substitute. The cock chosen for this purpose is always one of those freak chickens which have their feathers growing the wrong way.

"This cult of Vaudoux is extremely ancient, representing the most primitive form of religion. It is serpent worship, with all the incidentals of witchcraft, just as it prevails in the darkest parts of Africa. The sodality of sorcerers, the Am-

erians out of witches, are a widespread priesthood, whose organization and forms of ceremonials date back to a remote antiquity. One finds their order represented in our own country by so-called voodoo doctors, who deal in charms and 'hoodoo' spells and have an extensive practice among the colored people. The 'buck and wing' dancing of our nigger minstrel and vaudeville stage comes directly from the ceremonial dancing of Vaudoux, and its 'pigeon wings' and other peculiar capers have special significance in connection with the rites of Obeah.

"The religion of Vaudoux seems to be preserved on the island of Hayti with more of its pristine purity than anywhere else in the world, not even excepting Africa. The republic of Hayti, in fact, is nothing more nor less than a piece of the dark continent set down near our shores. Its population, numbering about 1,000,000 souls, is composed of remnants of hundreds of savage tribes brought thither during the slave dealing days to work on

the plantations. They were savages when they arrived and they are savages still, retaining their ancient customs and institutions.

"The cult of Obeah is a secret society, into which members are initiated with complicated rites. Its ceremonials consist largely of dances, which are accompanied by drums, and each particular solemnity or ritual is accompanied by its own 'tune,' if such a term may be used. Everywhere through the mountains of Hayti the traveler hears the drums constantly sounding, and to the ear of a stranger the noise would be nothing more than tomtomming, but to a member of the organization each kind of beating has its own peculiar meaning. Thus, on a ceremonial occasion, when the drummers strike the 'theme' the participants know the dance and song which go with it. There are from 300 to 400 different dances.

"The ceremonials are rituals of witchcraft and are held for the purpose of gaining various favors from the Great

Yellow Serpent, such as the cure of sickness, the bringing down of evil upon enemies and even the causing of death to persons who may have given offense to the society or to individual members. As the dances progress they become more and more furious, usually ending in a frenzy that overcomes all the participants, who become crazy for the time being, many of them falling into a sort of cataleptic condition. The culmination of the orgy is the sacrifice of a living animal and the drinking of its blood, which is passed around for that purpose in a jug mixed with rum. Finally, the victim is boiled in a pot and eaten.

"The drums used to accompany the dances are an important feature of the ceremonials. Usually they are employed in groups of three, each group having its peculiar color and significance. The red drums, for example, come into play only on those more serious occasions when the ritual happens to have for its special object the bringing down of wrath upon a person who may have been so unfortunate as to excite the ill-will of the society. This set of drums is known as the trio of death, red being the color appropriate to death and the sacred color of the Vaudoux. When beaten they are supposed to excite the vehement anger of the evil spirit which is to be directed against the individual aimed at.

"Each voodoo ceremony is presided over by a sorcerer-in-chief, known as the Papalou, who is assisted by a witch woman called the Mamelei. These personages have attained their high rank in the society, as it is understood, through the long practice of extraordinary wick-

Worship of the Great Yellow Serpent

edness, and usually they are of hideous aspect, the notion being that their supernatural power varies directly with their ugliness. Nobody dares to disobey them, inasmuch as to do so would be to invite the most dreadful consequences, and they are able to devote their entire time to evil-doing being maintained by gifts which their followers bestow upon them in the nominal shape of offerings to the devil god.

"These priests and priestesses are usually distinguished by a peculiar knotting of their kinky wool, but in Hayti any old man or woman of strange appearance is apt to be suspected of being a Papalou or Mamelei. They undoubtedly possess a remarkable knowledge of the medicinal properties of plants, especially as to poisons and febrifuges. So great is the faith in them as medical practitioners that in cases of serious illness they are commonly called in even by persons outside the pale of the voodoo organization, and to-day no regular physician, no matter how capable, can make a living in Hayti, notwithstanding the number of dreadful diseases which prevail on the island.

"The witch doctors of Vaudoux are known to be poisoners, and in this capacity they may well be dreaded by persons who have no faith in supernatural powers. It is said that they are acquainted with certain extracts and decoctions of plants which, being administered in small doses at intervals, will induce a gradual decay of the victim's mind, reducing him to a state of idiocy. They have other poisons which work in so subtle a fashion that no harm is done by them apparently until, when the secret administration of them is suddenly stopped, the unfortunate dies by reason of the withdrawal. The venom of the scorpion and the tarantula, intensified by distillation, makes the merest scratch of a dagger fatal, and if common report be credited, a mild expressed from certain large crinoid ants furnishes an equally deadly agent. Where an individual who has offended the society cannot be got at directly, his servant may be terrorized into giving him poison in his coffee, and it is

even asserted that the witch doctor knows how to communicate germs of leprosy to an untainted human being.

"No wonder, then, that voodoism extends a malign influence over the entire population of Hayti, those who have no faith in its supernatural agencies being afraid to offend the organization. Rather than do so, they will pay largely to have removed from themselves a 'spell' of the employment of which they may have received notice by some such means as finding a little bag containing chicken bones and a dried lizard or two attached to the gate post. Some of the highest officials on the island are known to belong to the mysterious cult, whose membership is by no means restricted to the lower orders, and history records that only a few years ago a President of the republic was initiated into the organization and took part in its most fearful rites, bathing himself in blood and otherwise declaring himself a believer in Obeah.

"The nominal religion of the people of Hayti is Roman Catholic, but there are few priests of that faith permanently resident in their parishes, and during their absence the churches are commonly deserted by the performance of voodoo rites. A curious mingling of Christianity and paganism in its worst form has come about, the temples of Obeah being frequently adorned with pictures of the Virgin Mary and the saints. It is even said that human sacrifices have been offered up on the altars of the church—the red drums of death being beaten in the sanctuary. It is worth mentioning by the way, that the kidnapping of children for sacrifices is not infrequent in Hayti, and not long ago a lady missionary testified that to her certain knowledge human flesh was often sold in the markets of the interior towns. This last might seem incredible were it not realized how well-nigh universal is cannibalism in the dark continent, and that most of the people of Hayti are almost unmodified savages.

"One gets a notion of the antiquity of voodoism from the testimony of Pliny, the historian, who, writing in the century before Christ, mentions the fact as well known in his time that African slaves in Rome and elsewhere in Italy had a religion of their own, which, when permitted, they practiced at night with horrid incantations, the presence of the serpent being considered necessary, and that there was a priestess who went into a species of frenzy, giving utterance while in that state to oracular sayings."



A Voodoo HOME

AN INCANTATION TO THE YELLOW SNAKE

A Voodoo DANCE