

# CROWNING A KING TO RAGTIME

The True Story of the Concert of the Powers, Which Drew the Attention of the Entire World to the South Sea Islands and Their Troubles in the Eventful Year 1887.

This is a true story. It was written for these pages by an officer of high rank in the American navy, who says:

"This is a true story, and some of it I was present to witness the situation. I believe I have handled the question from a new viewpoint. Stevenson has written the history of the war of 1887-88, but that wonderful writer did not live to bring it to its culmination. Klinger, in my story, will be recognized. I have given Leary his right name."

exile and Tamasese was the chosen one. Five grim warships seated him upon his tottering throne and heralded the act by a salute of guns, which is said by the natives to have been heard in far distant Savaii.

"At that time the only other warship in Apia was an American, commanded by a daring little Irishman, one Richard Leary. As Stevenson said, 'His name was diagnostic, but it was not required.' Over all his future actions a spirit of fun presided. No action where laughter could be provoked was omitted.

Tamasese was thus reinforced with many more guns and ammunition enough to kindle the heart of a savage. Besides other things landed from the German gunboat was an assortment of German flags.

"These flags were the wedges that permitted the German commodore to enter the ring with his own men and guns. Mataafa finally attacked Tamasese in his headquarters at Lotoanuu, and in doing so insulted the many flags purposely and with German authority displayed by the Tamasese warriors. Germany had

Leary would have shone as a popular hero, for the commodore knew that there were civilians on board the Adams who would give color to the tale in its telling.

"The upshot was that the bombardment did not come off. The Mataafas were jubilant. They believed that Leary with one ship had intimidated the Germans with five.

"The Germans were at their wits' ends. Something must be done to save the situation.

"Then was done the most ill conceived and foolishly executed piece of work that can be laid at the German door in Samoa.

and America feared Mataafa's German sympathies. When once she sets her mind upon a thing there's no turning it. Meanwhile Mataafa had been taken to Germany and had been won over by that astute diplomat Bismarck. He was being saved for the time when Germany felt that her intrigues could again be put forth to win the islands for her own. Laupepe had been returned from his exile and soon after died from a broken heart. Again the time had arrived for the election of a new king.

"Mataafa was the natives' choice, and if he had become king the islands would have passed to Germany without the useless bloodshed. But England

THE Hongkong club was crowded. It was the hour when the cosmopolitan inhabitants of the far eastern city were accustomed to gather for their relaxation and gossip before dressing for the formal dinner. In the orient British colonials are loath to abandon the customs of their motherland.

I had entered the club in company with two naval men—a British commander and an American of similar rank. The two were friends of some years' standing and both had been in that unfortunate affair in Samoa which had been the culmination of the tripartite control of that hotbed of diplomatic intrigue.

While we were sipping our drinks at one of the tables a party of half a dozen men of that rotundity which seems inseparable from our idea of a German entered the club and took a table near ours.

Commander Blick, the American, suddenly rose and shook hands with one of the newcomers and then came back to us. I noted that his face wore a thoughtful look.

"That was Klinger," he said. "He's on his way back to Samoa."

The Englishman stared angrily in their direction.

"I would as soon shake hands with a snake," he exclaimed. "I wonder what rascality he's up to now?"

"Who is he?" I whispered.

"He is the head of a German firm in Samoa," Blick returned aloud. "He was Bismarck's weapon of revenge that put all three of the contesting powers in the same boat. He allowed our expedition to walk into a carefully laid ambush when a word from him would have saved us."

"He was a spy and should have been hanged as such after our defeat at Fangalli," Commander Wilson exclaimed.

"You must not forget, Wilson," Blick returned calmly, "that Germany, although not actually fighting us, was to all intents and purposes our enemy. The situation was paradoxical. Why a foreign war was not the outcome of that long intrigue is difficult to understand. Germany had spent years in endeavoring to bring about an intolerable situation which would prove the hopelessness of the tripartite government. She had always found England and America lined up against her. She had sacrificed more than 20 of her sailors in the cause which in '99 seemed doomed to failure. Klinger had seen these innocent fellow countrymen slain by savages incited by acts of men of our races. Was it natural that he should have mercy in his heart for us?"

"I can't understand a reason sufficient that would justify a white man to do such a dastardly act as his at Sunga that day," Wilson insisted angrily. "He could have remained mute; then maybe we might not have blamed him so much, but to appear willing to guide us and then lead us into that ambush puts him, in my opinion, beyond the pale of civilization. It makes him as much a savage as any Samoan."

## WHAT STEVENSON MISSED

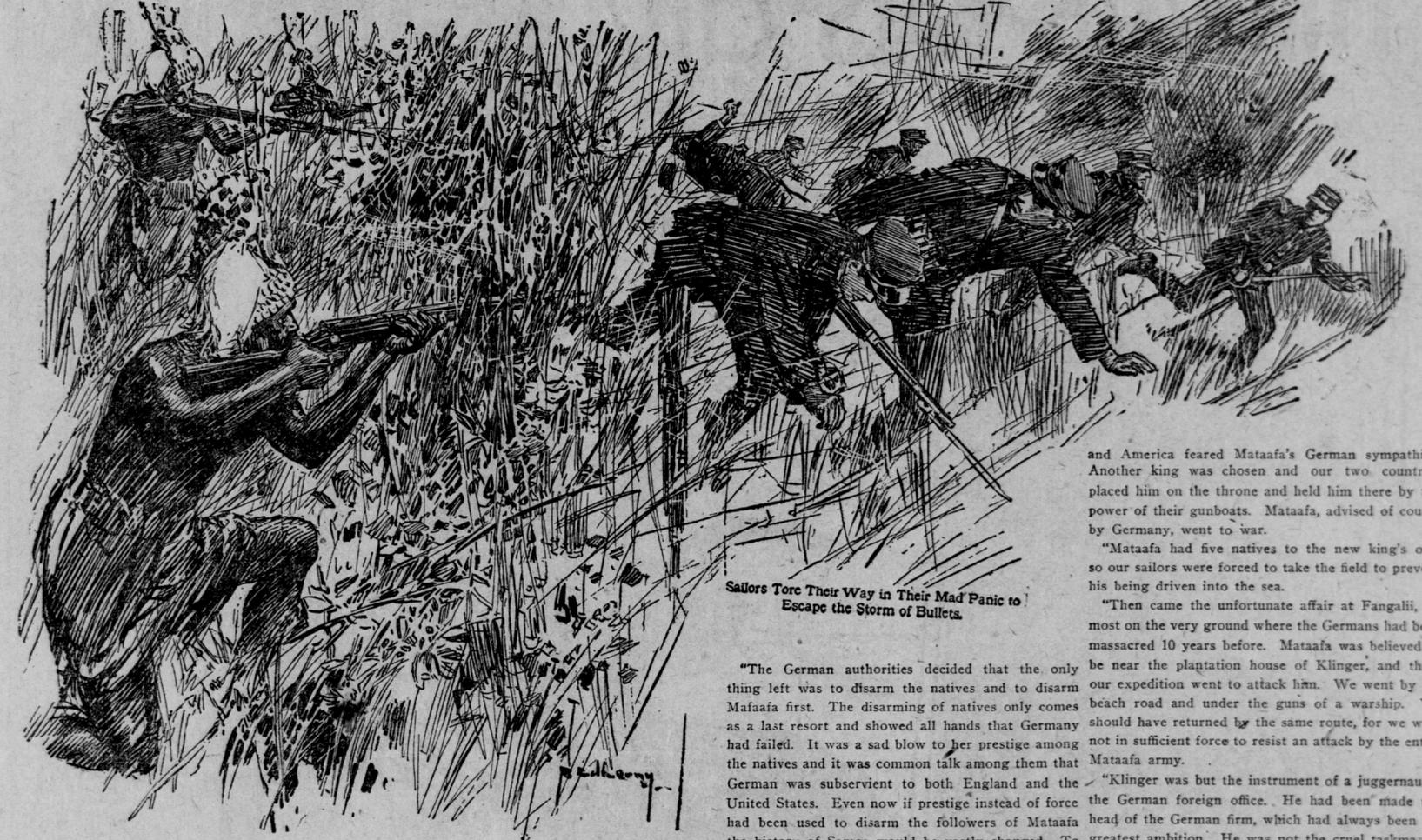
"Tell us the story," I urged, for I saw that Blick could shed new light upon a complicated tangle which had some years ago attracted the attention of the whole civilized world.

"The immortal Stevenson," Blick began thoughtfully, "could not tell all of the cruel intrigues of the foreigners to despoil the childlike Samoans of their lands and eventually of their liberty. He did not half tell of the subtle, almost devilish, machinations of the German firm, backed by German warships; of the spiteful interference of the English and the humorous tricks of an American naval officer that came near ruining the Germans' well laid plans by showing them up ridiculous in the eyes of all.

"You, Wilson, saw only the culminating event of that long intrigue. You were a boy in knee breeches when Germany first put in motion its carefully thought out program which eventually gave them the two richest islands of Samoa—Savaii and Upolu," Blick continued, "while I was even then a midshipman of nearly two years' standing, and yet we are now of equal rank. That is the difference between promotion in our two services.

"It was on August 24, 1887, that Germany made her first strike against the liberty of the Samoans, Laupepe, or Malietoa, as he was called, had been chosen king by his countrymen. The unfortunate Laupepe had not shown himself partial to Germany, represented by the German firm, so Laupepe was voted persona non grata, and was marked for exile.

"As Stevenson aptly puts it, the German man of war waited 'as the burglar waits till the patrol gets by. When the mail for Sydney had sailed and the eyes of the world were withdrawn and Samoa plunged again for a period of weeks into her original island obscurity,' Germany opened up her gun ports and showed her eager hand. Laupepe was on his way to



Sailors Tore Their Way in Their Mad Panic to Escape the Storm of Bullets.

Leary of all others confounded the Germans. With him they always had to reckon. He seemed never to sleep. When Tamasese was crowned at Mulunuu with impressive ceremonies by the German navy Leary took ashore his band and confounded the outraged Germans with gratuitous American ragtimes. He was forever writing letters to the German commodore which gave that individual much uneasiness to answer.

"And all the time war was raging between those loyal to Tamasese and those of the natives who were incensed by the high handed actions of the Germans. Mataafa, whose name spelled disaster to us of the troubles of '99, was the leader of those opposed to the rule of Germany through their puppet. The war was at first confined entirely among the natives. The whites along with women were considered neutral. The first collision took place at Matautu, and Mataafa was victorious, driving the loyal natives, as the Germans called them, into the promontory of Mulunuu, where they remained under the protection of the warships' guns. Germany as yet only had given moral support to their dusky allies, of course supplying them with an unlimited stock of guns and ammunition and the strategical advice of their officers, but soon after the defeat of Matautu Germany was forced to undertake the active support of Tamasese, for otherwise Mataafa would have been victorious, proclaiming himself the rightful king of Samoa, and Leary would have been only too happy to back him up with the guns of the Adams, which vessel he commanded. This was just one year after Tamasese had been crowned by the German commodore to the tune of Leary's band.

## WHERE LEARY ACTED

"And now is where Commander Leary was 'in the front of the row.' Tamasese was at Mulunuu and Mataafa was surrounding it on all sides but one—the sea—where the German warships lay. A war party of Tamasese braves one dark night seized the house of an American near by, pointing their guns menacingly at the owner. Leary saw his chance and was not long in taking advantage of it. He landed his men at the outraged house within easy gunfire of the Tamasese lines and anchored his ship in the commanding position to support him. He was master of the art of loose speaking, and by sunset all Apia knew that Leary would at dawn avenge the insult upon an American subject.

"Here is where the Germans lost their nerve, and in so doing knocked the props from under their puppet king. Tamasese in the night evacuated Mulunuu and carried his wandering government six miles to windward of Apia. At Lotoanuu he made his camp, and Mataafa slowly collected his forces to move against his entrenched enemy.

"About this time another German warship arrived to swell the gathering fleet. It came from the Gilbert islands, where it had been disarming turbulent na-

been insulted! The flag outraged! War was declared at once upon Mataafa. To recount all the amusing incidents of the next few months between the German commodore and Irish Leary would take me all night to tell," Blick added, "but there was one incident which in our navy has become a classic.

"Mataafa, undaunted, knowing that the Germans would attack him at the first opportunity, gathered his forces at Lauili. The rivals for Samoan supremacy were inactive for more than a month and during this time made their camps as near impregnable as possible from the Samoan standpoint. Mataafa was being openly supplied with ammunition and stores by the English and Americans, and Germany was giving all possible military aid to Tamasese. The Mataafa camp began to cause the German commodore a great deal of uneasiness. A proclamation was issued by him that no Samoan soldiers must encamp within five miles of a German plantation and that if it occurred he would be forced to use punitive measures to enforce his order. This was, of course, aimed at Mataafa, for Lauili was within this limit of one of the largest of the plantations—Vaietele, whose overseer was Klinger.

"This order roused a storm of protest from both the English and the Americans, but Leary was in the front seat, as usual. By his 'loose talk' again he made the Mataafa adherents believe that if the German warships attacked them he, with the Adams, would interfere. His opportunity was not long in coming. The German commodore sailed early one morning from Apia and the Adams quietly slipped its moorings and followed after. Leary, running the risk of putting his ship on the dangerous coral reefs, kept inshore of the German gunboat Adler. When off Lauili the German lowered his gun ports. It was ready to carry out the commodore's threat. The Adams was directly in the line of fire.

"The Adler maneuvered to get inside of the Adams, but the wily Leary outmaneuvered her. The two warships were within hailing distance.

## THE THREAT OF WAR

"I intend bombarding Lauili; your ship is in danger from my shells," the commodore hailed. Leary heard the message and smiled grimly. A malign spirit of humor presided over his actions that day.

"I do not recognize your claim to the ocean," he retorted.

"I shall fire in 15 minutes," came back in the commodore's angry voice. "Do you wish war with my government?"

"I am not seeking it, but in the interest of humanity I protest against bombarding a town in which are women and children. If war results it will be your choosing."

"The interests of humanity was the block over which the commodore stumbled; if now he bombarded and innocent women and children were killed,

"The German authorities decided that the only thing left was to disarm the natives and to disarm Mataafa first. The disarming of natives only comes as a last resort and showed all hands that Germany had failed. It was a sad blow to her prestige among the natives and it was common talk among them that German was subservient to both England and the United States. Even now if prestige instead of force had been used to disarm the followers of Mataafa the history of Samoa would be vastly changed. To land a party of bluejackets in the Samoa jungle to disarm a hundred times their number of turbulent natives was worse than rash, and that is what was done by a nation whose knowledge of the savage should have taught it better. Even now, if they had been landed boldly in the daytime and had fearlessly begun their disarming, the prestige of the white man would have carried the day; but to sneak ashore by night was only to increase the danger of resistance and to minimize the authority of the attack, and attack above all else the Germans should have avoided. The thing was a bluff, and it is impossible to bluff with stealth.' In the dead of night a party of 150 armed German sailors was landed near the camp of Mataafa. They were attacked, took refuge in the plantation house of Klinger and were there besieged. Their casualties were more than 60, including one officer and 20 men killed, and many heads were taken by the natives and paraded through the streets of Apia. Klinger saved the sailors from annihilation, it is said. After the day had broken he went out fearlessly and alone among the native enemy to gather up and bring back the dead. He was not molested; the savages even helped him in his solemn task.

## THE SPILLING OF BLOOD

"Before this Leary had been relieved and the United States was represented by an admiral with three ships. We had finally awakened to the real intentions of Germany. She desired the islands for her own—the tripartite government had not been profitable. Her hope was that England and the United States would soon be tired of the ceaseless turmoil and be glad to be rid of these troublesome islanders. England would have been glad to let go. But the United States saw great strategical possibilities in the harbor of Pango-Pango, on the island of Tutuila, and feared that Germany also coveted this port.

"Then came the hurricane. The powerful warships in a single night were reduced to wrecks of wood and twisted iron, while thousands of white men were thrown upon the bounty of the Samoans. Both warring factions vied with each other in deeds of valor, succoring the helpless sailors during that terrible storm. All grudges were buried by the natives, and when day broke over that scene of devastation grim visaged war had hidden its head. Germany could not do less, and besides her ships were wrecks and her sailors destitute, so she gallantly 'buried the hatchet' and waited for another opportunity.

"During our enforced stay in Apia after the hurricane I saw a great deal of Klinger and came to both like and admire him. He brooded sorely over the massacre of the German sailors. I suppose you know, Wilson, that the German landing was betrayed by either an Englishman or an American?"

Wilson nodded and would have interrupted, but at this moment the Germans were leaving their table. We watched them go and then Blick continued:

"Now we come to the war of '99. In the interven-

and America feared Mataafa's German sympathies. Another king was chosen and our two countries placed him on the throne and held him there by the power of their gunboats. Mataafa, advised of course by Germany, went to war.

"Mataafa had five natives to the new king's one, so our sailors were forced to take the field to prevent his being driven into the sea.

"Then came the unfortunate affair at Fangalli, almost on the very ground where the Germans had been massacred 10 years before. Mataafa was believed to be near the plantation house of Klinger, and there our expedition went to attack him. We went by the beach road and under the guns of a warship. We should have returned by the same route, for we were not in sufficient force to resist an attack by the entire Mataafa army.

"Klinger was but the instrument of a juggernaut—the German foreign office. He had been made the head of the German firm, which had always been his greatest ambition. He was not the cruel taskmaster his brother overseers had shown themselves to be. He was loved and respected by all natives alike. His name spelled justice to those childlike savages. Bismarck expected him to do his duty by the German policy, upon the success of which Klinger's future in life depended. He had witnessed his own countrymen die through the treachery of the races which our force represented. Doubtless as he looked upon our war party that day these thoughts passed before his mind.

"Our defeat at Mataafa's hands would mean not only success for the German policy, but also for himself. He owed us nothing; in fact, he had strong reasons to think that we owed something to those poor martyred sailors sleeping beneath the monument at Mulunuu. Our defeat must end the war. He realized that the end could come only through the shedding of English and American blood. I do not believe, as others have tried to make us think, that he deliberately and with a heart as black as a demon directed us into that ambush. I am sure it occasioned him much sorrow to be obliged to withhold his knowledge that Mataafa's war parties were in great strength and waiting to attack us upon our return unless we took the beach road. I am sure the man hoped even against his own interests that we would succeed in holding our own, which we would have done if the Colt gun had not jammed.

"When I look back upon that fight I marvel at our childlike faith in our puny power. The trail was narrow and hemmed in on all sides by tropical thickets. On our right hand was a barbed wire fence, through which the distracted sailors tore their way in their mad panic to escape the storm of bullets directed upon them with unerring aim by thousands of concealed savages. Our officers and men were left dead or dying on the field without ever an attempt to rescue them from the grewsome spoils of the natives. Klinger risked his life in a vain attempt to prevent the defilement of the bodies of the slain.

"All three nations," Blick continued, after a short pause, "were now on equal terms. Each had sacrificed the blood of its sailors. The revulsion of feeling awaited by Bismarck had come. All clamored for a cessation of the senseless strife.

"You know the rest," Blick said, turning to me. "A commission was appointed and the tripartite government was at an end. Germany obtained two islands, Savaii and Upolu, and the United States the island of Tutuila, upon which is the harbor of Pango-Pango, a magnificent roadstead, but as useful to us as if it were on the moon. The German firm is steadily growing in wealth. It covers nearly all the fertile soil in Samoa—grove upon grove of cocoanut trees." Wilson remained silent.

"I suppose you're right, Black," he said finally. "I can forgive him of all but one thing—that of being a German."

"A national failing," Blick returned with a smile as we rose to dress for the evening meal.