

TAHITI GREET VETERANS WITH ANCIENT RITES

Fantastic Dances Are Revived to Welcome Returning Soldiers.

WOMEN SING FOLK SONGS

Walking on Hot Stones Notable Feature of the Ceremony—Priests Side-step the Hot Spots—Ancient Customs All but Suppressed by Civilizing French Influences—Queer Rites Described by Eye Witness.

When the boys of Tahiti came marching home from the world war the fantastic native dances, the "himinies" or folk songs which have been compared to Wagnerian operas, and the ancient fire-walking ceremony, were revived to welcome them.

These customs, all but suppressed by civilizing French influences, were among the most interesting practices of Polynesian peoples, according to a bulletin from the National Geographic society in Washington.

"Tahiti women were extolled by early travelers as being the most beautiful in the Pacific islands; their men still are fine physical specimens; and the early civilization of this isolated people has been one of the wonders of science," says the bulletin.

"The Tahitians knew some of the constellations, navigated by the positions of the stars, made progress in music which is startling, yet preserved many savage customs, such as plucking an eye from a human being to be placed in the mouth of a priest as an acceptable offering to their gods."

The bulletin then quotes from a diary presented to the society by the late S. P. Langley who visited the island nearly twenty years ago and heard old-time songs and saw native dances and rites, which have been revived to honor the men who fought under allied colors in France.

Saw Ancient Rites.

"The native women sing 'himinies' with some very striking effects," he wrote. "The voices have something plangent and metallic in them, yet are melodious and in harmony. In the first song, at the end of each verse, all stopped suddenly, giving the effect of the 'couac' of the opera singer. In all the verses there was an undertone beneath the song. This undertone continued alone for a few seconds at the end of each verse, after the superimposed song was finished, and died out separately and slowly, like the drone of some great bagpipe. The natives gave names to each of us, mine being 'A-to-hi,' which means 'qui a les lauriers.'"

"I went out to the public dancing and singing, in competition for prizes offered by the government. It takes place in the square before the government house, and everybody is there, either performing or looking on. Almost the whole population of the island has come.

"The chief interest among the islanders seems to lie in the competition of singing 'himinies,' and next to that in the dancing, which is pantomimic as much as regular. As a public show most of the native dances are unrepresentable, so that, I have understood, the authorities had some difficulty in finding a dance which will do for such an occasion. Savages are here from the neighboring tribes, a fine looking chief from Cook Island taking a part, and a woman from the same island gave a little of the presentable part of the 'hula-hula.' Her body would be quivering like a jelly, and suddenly grow rigid as a statue—a notably odd effect.

Thirty Take Part.

"In one very good dance by the Cook Islanders over thirty persons take part. They sit down in three rows, representing rowers in a canoe, while two scull and steer. They have paddles, and paddle to the sound of drums. A lookout man sweeps the horizon till he sees a big fish, and the canoe rows for him. One of the steers sharpens a harpoon and passes it forward, and the fish (a man dressed in red) is harpooned. There is a tremendous time in pulling him in; he runs around and entangles the line among the bystanders, and finally he gets a second harpoon in him, is hauled on board and (in pantomime) cut up with an ax, dismembered and eaten by the crew. Everybody is in motion, but it is rather a pantomime than a dance.

"In the afternoon I went to see preparations for the fire walking. Within a hundred yards of the ship a shallow pit is dug, about 9 by 20 feet by 18 inches deep. This is to be filled with firewood and the stones heaped on the wood. These are smooth, water-worn, volcanic stones of varying size, but all rather large and weighing, at a guess, from 15 to 50 pounds. The number of stones was about two hundred, and their average length about 15 inches.

"In preparation for the fire ceremony I took a ship's tin measure full of fresh water. This is to be used in half filling, with three or four measures, a large wooden bucket or tub with fresh water, into which one of the smaller hot stones from the center of

the fire is to be put after the ceremony.

"The wooden bucket was provided, together with iron rakes from the engineer's room. The firewood was scarcely sufficient for a good heating; the stones in the center and beneath were, however, undoubtedly 'red hot.' The outer inclosure, surrounded by canvas walls, was about 120 feet by 60 feet.

Walk on Hot Stones.

"The fire there, I am told, invariably burned for four or five days before, and the stones became coated with lime. I learn that on one occasion, the French authorities having forbidden the priest to perform in his usual place, he made the 'oven' of other stones, heating them for 36 hours. On attempting to cross, he walked only part of the way and ran the rest. His two disciples and a woman also ran across, and the woman's feet were so badly burned that she was laid up for a week. The prophet and his disciples declined to have their feet examined, and cleared out of sight.

"When the priest came in the stones on the side of the pile would bear to be touched by the hand.

"The aids began to turn the stones over with long green poles which burned at the ends. The upper stones were none of them red hot on top; the lower ones, two layers deep, however, could be seen to glow between the others, but they were only near red hot in the center.

"The old priest, Papa-Ita, beat the near stones with a large bunch of Ti leaves three times, and then began to walk through the middle rather hurriedly, followed by two acolytes, who appeared to shun the hot central ridge and walked along the sides. Then he walked back, followed by several; then back once more with an increasing crowd, most of whom avoided the center. The horny-footed natives did the rest. One white boy took off his shoes, but could not stand the heat upon his bare feet and stopped.

Exhibition of Savage Magic.

"At this point (i.e., after the second passage forward and back) I had the hottest stone of the pile in the center, on which the feet had certainly rested several times, hauled out and placed in the water bucket. The stone was much larger than I had reckoned or wished. A trifle of the water was spilled by the plunge, and the rest boiled hard and continued to do so for about twelve minutes. At the end of that time the stone was still too hot to handle, and I sent to the ship for a sack to hold it, directing the remaining water to be measured. It was a long stone; the lower part had been immersed in the central fire, and it was certainly much hotter than the average center stones. During this time other persons walked over the stones without special preparation, the disciples still dodging the hot central part and following near the cooler part. I asked Papa-Ita if he could take upon his hand a small hot stone near the center. He said he would, but he did not. Next many white persons walked over, stopping long enough to lean over and lightly and quickly touch the hottest stones with their hands.

"After this the outer crowd was allowed to come inside the barrier. It was a capital exhibition of savage magic and well worth seeing, but no miracle."

GERMANS DESERTING ARMY

One Hundred Thousand Soldiers Have Fled From Country.

One hundred thousand officers and soldiers of the German armies have deserted the colors and fled to neutral countries. There are 45,000 deserters in Switzerland and fully as many have gone to Holland. A large number also have found their way into overseas countries.

The German government has proclaimed a general amnesty for all deserters and extended to them an invitation to re-enter the fatherland, providing, however, there are no charges of treason against them.

Preacher Aided Kentucky Moonshiners

Confessing to aiding and assisting in moonshine stilling, G. W. Stanley of Ash Camp, Ky., for many years a preacher, has been arrested and placed under a \$500 bond.

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Navy Lacks Men; Only One Battleship Fully Manned

DEFENDING the United States today in active sea service there is exactly one warship, the 20,000-ton battleship North Dakota, built in 1910, Capt. Thomas J. Senn commanding. With headquarters at Guantanamo, Cuba, Captain Senn commands the entire force that is ready to engage an enemy in either the Atlantic or Pacific. The North Dakota not only is able to navigate the sea at its full 21-knot speed, but could fire every one of its ten 12-inch guns and 14 5-inch guns.



All the other battleships and cruisers and most of the destroyers and other vessels of both the Atlantic and Pacific fleets are tied up in ports and navy yards, unfit for active service for want of enough men to man them.

At the Philadelphia navy yard are the battleships Connecticut, Louisiana, New Hampshire, Kansas, Minnesota, Michigan and Nevada; at the Boston navy yard, the battleships Utah and Florida of the Atlantic fleet, and Virginia and New Jersey of the Pacific fleet; at the Norfolk, Va., yard the battleships South Carolina and Oklahoma; at Brooklyn the battleships Pennsylvania and Arizona, and at New York the Delaware.

The Pacific fleet, under Admiral Rodman, was able to negotiate Secretary of the Navy Daniels' excursion to Hawaii and get back to home ports, where the ships are riding at anchor awaiting full complements of men. At the Mare Island navy yard are the battleships Rhode Island, Georgia, Nebraska and Vermont; at San Pedro, the Idaho and Mississippi; at San Francisco, the New Mexico, and at Bremerton navy yard the Wyoming, Arkansas, New York, and Texas.

Admiral Wilson disclosed the condition of the fleets when he informed the house committee on naval affairs that the North Dakota is the only warship able to put to sea with a full complement of 1,100 men.

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