

The sight that amazed us the most was the church located in a clearing in the center of the village. The pastor had built it and it was undoubtedly the most beautiful study in simple church architecture I have ever seen. It was on the order of our small community churches--all white cement with multi-colored stained glass windows. Inside we found about ten piles of grass mats which they spread out and sit on during the service. There was an altar with a Bible and Hymn book both printed in the native tongue. They have church service every Sunday and are a deeply religious people. The schoolhouse, another cement structure was nearby. It was an old building with just openings for windows and no furniture in evidence. The pastor (as every one called him) was also the teacher of the school, but at this time the school was in recess until after the Christmas holidays. He teaches the little English that he knows, mathematics, reading and writing and the Samoan language, as he went to college in Samoa--a London Seminary College.

Frank introduced us to the Pastor, whose name in the native language I did not get, but in English it is Samuel after the prophet of that name. When I told him I was the son of a Pastor in the states, he grinned broadly and insisted that we three come back at 6 o'clock to eat supper and stay all night in his large thatched house called a "folly".

We continued our tour and were followed constantly by 20 to 30 children of all ages, who kept asking, "You my friend?"--and when we replied in the affirmative they would ask us for chewing gum. They also remarked at intervals, "American--very good" and to our surprise they broke out singing in perfect English, "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine" and on key too, although most of them do not speak English. We learned that the Marines a year or so ago had taught them to sing this song. One or two even sang "Shoo-shoo Baby". The small ones up to 3 or 4 wore nothing while the others were dressed as their fathers, in a wrap around cloth called a "lava-lava". The girls reach the age of 12-14 before they start wearing dresses like their mothers. They were well disciplined and we enjoyed having them around. They don't have any toys but learn early to carry things for their parents.

In the village proper the "follies" were thatched huts with the family living and sleeping on grass (thick) mats. An occasional chair was seen and a cot now and then in the "follies" of the prominent families. One family had acquired a large tent and had built a wooden floor. This was Frank (the interpreter) family and he was very proud when he showed us his tent. At one place we saw a half-caste mother holding a baby that was nearly white (most of the people are dark brown). Frank explained in a deeply regretful tone of voice that a marine or two had broken the laws of their people but added with a smile that the Marine Commanding Officer had put them in the brig for their misconduct. There is very little of this happening among these people as they are fairly well educated and are strictly disciplined by their native government. Many of the natives are comparatively light through generations of half castes.

At what we know as 6 o'clock by our watches we went to the Pastor's "folly" but found that their time was just five o'clock and we sat down on the only bench to wait for the Pastor to return from his bath. His family consisted of 5 small boys, the oldest about 12, his wife, a large woman upward of 200 pounds, who didn't speak English but was a congenial hostess, and two older daughters who did the cooking. In our first meeting the Pastor wore the customary "lava-lava" or loin cloth--the brighter the color the more admired it is by the natives. After his bath the Pastor appeared in a neatly pressed white shirt and a pure white "lava-lava" wrapped around his waist and trailing near his ankles. Immediately we slipped down off the bench and sat on the floor mats with our legs crossed and settled down to a nice chat--depending on the few words of English the Pastor spoke. We tried at all times to do things as they did so they would accept us a bit more than if acted distinctly state-side, (American) in their presence.

The Pastor was a large dark ruddy complexioned man--always smiling. He had a large abdominal protrusion which was much in evidence and like the traditional Santa Claus it "shook like a bowl of jelly", when he laughed and that was quite frequent. We had talked only a few minutes when his wife handed him 3 necklaces of mixed shells which the Pastor thanked them profusely but later found that this was not the last of the gifts that the Pastor's wife would be responsible for giving before we left the village.

From this time on they surprised us with one thing after another. Next, he asked us if we would like to eat. We were hungry and were willing to try anything, but it turned out to be a supper beyond our expectations. The two daughters and the oldest son scurried around with the Pastor to fix us a meal. I even suspected during his absence at intervals that he was going around to his neighbors borrowing food. They cooked with an instrument something like a blow torch, in one corner of the room away from the wind. By this time it was dark and the table was brought in--a nice table cloth cover--some beautiful thin china tea cups and saucers and plates, and even one chair was found to give us another seat besides the lone bench. This of course had us flabbergasted to see these fineries of civilization on a native island in the far Pacific, but it seemed that nothing was too good for their American friends--although they themselves ate afterwards on the grass mats on the floor.