Errata

p.x, caption to plate 3.  evening should read enemy

p.xii, para.2, line 2  deak should read desk
para.3, line 11  New Zealand's should read New Zealanders

p.xv  marama should read Marama

vakatevora should read vakatevoro

p.324, line 7/8  adventurers should read adventures

p.328, under heading Mitchell Library Sydney Parker Papers should read Parkes Papers

p.329  La Forge should read La Farge
Viceroy of the Pacific
The Majesty of Colour
A Life of Sir John Bates Thurston
Plate 1 At Government House, 15 September 1896: Sir John Thurston with his son, Basset and young Horace Berry in a Solomon Islands canoe; Lady Thurston, nurse, and private secretary Gledhill on the steps.
Viceroy of the Pacific  
The Majesty of Colour  
A Life of Sir John Bates Thurston  

Deryck Scarr

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Deryck Scarr, Senior Fellow in Pacific History at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Australian National University, is the author of Fragments of Empire (Canberra, 1967); an editor of Pacific Islands Portraits, and More Pacific Islands Portraits and of volume one in the Pacific History Series, A Cruize in a Queensland Labour Vessel to the South Seas; he is joint editor of the Journal of Pacific History; in 1973 he published I, the Very Bayonet, precursor to the present book; his biography of Fiji’s national figure, Ratu Sukuna: soldier, statesman, man of two worlds, published by Macmillan, is to be launched during the tenth anniversary celebration of Fiji’s independence in 1980.

...a period of indirect rule when the Governor was trying to create an atmosphere of trust through government by the Chiefs that had ceded their country to the Crown, when Native Affairs were the main, and in the early years at any rate, the sole concern of Government. The Native Regulation Board was fortunate in having the assistance of European officials long resident in the country, men who spoke the language fluently, who were well versed in custom and observed the same, and who were on intimate terms with the Chiefs. The aim of the Board was to allow the Fijians to govern themselves as far as possible with a minimum of interference. With Rokos and Bulis accustomed to rule and a people ready to obey, the administration ran smoothly and there was happiness and contentment in spite of the decrease in the population due, in all probability, to the introduction of infectious deseases both before and after Cession... The period ended with the death of Sir John Thurston.

Ratu (Sir) J.L.V. Sukuna, Legislative Council speech, 24 February 1944
Summary

This volume, covering the years 1875-1897, takes up where *I, the Very Bayonet* (Canberra, 1973) left the life of Sir John Thurston — the merchant seaman, botanical collector, acting-consul, planter, who became champion of Fijian rights in the independent Kingdom of Fiji, was Colonial Secretary after Cession in 1875, and died as Governor of Fiji and High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, the most influential individual wherever British rule touched the South Seas. He was a witty as well as, quite often, an angry man; accordingly this volume quotes from his large, varied private correspondence to reveal his relations with Fijian chiefs, his jaundiced view of German activity in Samoa and New Zealand's attempted intrusion into the Pacific Islands. The result is an intimate, insider's view of the South Seas during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.
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Introduction

To embark on a biography in two rather large volumes at a time when financial gloom was settling over the publishing world may be accounted a challenge to providence; and the payment exacted in the present instance is that this book, sequel to I, the Very Bayonet, was ready for the press five years ago. The author can only beg the indulgence of such readers of the forerunner as remain alive and still interested.

Protégé and, in turn, patron of great chiefs in the South Seas, masterful servant of a remote Colonial Office, mordant observer of human follies, J.B. Thurston has his followers in the Pacific, at any rate. Among Fijians he was Na Kena Vai: Bayonet, according to the most ready translation, by extension; Pilot-Fish, as Ratu Sir Edward Cakobau used very freely to gloss it; but perhaps best of all, as I am grateful to Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara for suggesting, simply and literally stingray (the tail of which was indeed used as bayonet or spear-tip) - the image being that the ray, Thurston, keeps station below schools of fish, the Fijians.

So did Thurston with Fijians. 'I shall not find another Minister here', as a blundering British envoy, Commodore Goodenough, was told by the man who gave Thurston the title, Ratu Apenisa Seru Cakobau. I, the Very Bayonet was translated into Fijian by Mr Urupeni Senibulu of the Fiji Broadcasting Commission and read over the air in weekly instalments, a penance for listeners who were not ready for church on Sunday evening.

And years before, on 24 February 1944 when, as Secretary for Fijian Affairs, Ratu J.L.V. Sukuna - soon to be Ratu Sir Lala - was resurrecting the semi-autonomous Fijian Administration from two generations of decay he, the leading Fijian statesman of his day, had a pretty clear picture of the role played by Na Kena Vai. As Ratu Sukuna - born 1888 - explained to Legislative Council, the early years of colonial rule in Fiji were a time
when the Governor was trying to create an atmosphere of trust through government by the chiefs that had ceded their country to the Crown, when Native Affairs were the main, and in the early years at any rate, the sole concern of Government.... The aim...was to allow the Fijians to govern themselves as far as possible with a minimum of interference.... The period ended with the death of Sir John Thurston.

Ratu Sukuna kept Na Kena Vai's valedictory photograph hanging over his desk.

And how accurate was his perception of the man, his father's patron, emerges from the following pages. Overlapping a little with the last chapter of the previous volume, they take up Thurston's life in 1875. The Kingdom of Fiji is a thing of the past; the course to be taken by colonial rule in the new Crown Colony is open to doubt; his own future is in the balance. And with Fiji about to become the centre of British influence in the wider region through the Western Pacific High Commission, an additional sphere of activity and observation is opening up. Samoan resistance to Germany will excite his active sympathy, New Zealand's ambition to rule in the Pacific Islands incite his combined anger and amusement - in particular, because white New Zealand argued their right to govern there from their impeccable, impartial record in dealing with the Maori....

The force of fun or folly could no further go, as he would have put it; a comment which applied to so much of the later nineteenth century Pacific world, seen here through the eyes of a uniquely well-placed and well-informed participant.
A note on orthography

The well-established, highly economical Fijian orthography is used:

- \( b \) is pronounced as \( mb \) in \textit{number}
- \( c \) is pronounced as \( th \) in \textit{that}
- \( d \) is pronounced as \( nd \) in \textit{end}
- \( g \) is pronounced as \( ng \) in \textit{singer}
- \( q \) is pronounced as \( ng \) in \textit{finger}
## Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adi</td>
<td>honorific for woman of rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bati</td>
<td>borderers, primarily owing military rather than menial service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bete</td>
<td>priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosevakaturaga</td>
<td>Council of Chiefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buli</td>
<td>chiefly title in Bua; adopted as title for heads of districts under colonial government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>draunikau</td>
<td>sorcery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaise</td>
<td>person of no consequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ka vakavanua</td>
<td>custom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lala</td>
<td>service obligation to chiefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lotu</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lovo</td>
<td>pit-oven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magiti</td>
<td>feast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marana</td>
<td>woman of rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masi</td>
<td>bark-cloth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matanitu</td>
<td>Colonial Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>mataqali</td>
<td>clan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qase</td>
<td>elder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qase Levu</td>
<td>Chairman of Methodist Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratu</td>
<td>honorific for man of rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roko Tui</td>
<td>sacred chiefs of Rewa and Tailevu, traditionally; under colonial rule, title of governors of provinces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tabua</td>
<td>whale's tooth, symbolic object of veneration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taukei</td>
<td>owners - Fijians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turaga</td>
<td>man of rank</td>
</tr>
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<td>Vale Levu</td>
<td>as used here, Government House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vatu</td>
<td>stingray; from use made of its tail, spearpoint, bayonet</td>
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<tr>
<td>vakamisioneri</td>
<td>Methodist missionary collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vakatevora</td>
<td>pre-Christiano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vasu</td>
<td>sister's son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waqa ni Viti</td>
<td>double canoe, drua</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations

BCS  Records of the British Consul to Samoa
BM  British Museum
CO  Colonial Office
COCP  Colonial Office Confidential Print
FCSO  Records of the Colonial Secretary's Office, Fiji
FM  Fiji Museum
FO  Foreign Office
HL  Hocken Library, Dunedin
ML  Mitchell Library, Sydney
MMS  Records of the Methodist Missionary Society, London
MOM  Records of the Methodist Overseas Mission, Mitchell Library
NAF  National Archives of Fiji
NLA  National Library of Australia
PMB  Pacific Manuscripts Bureau
PRO  Public Record Office
RH  Rhodes House, Oxford
RNAS  Royal Navy: Australian Station: Records of the Commander-in-Chief
TL  Turnbull Library, Wellington
WPHC  Western Pacific High Commission Records
Chapter 1

'An opportunity to vindicate myself'

Summer Isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres of sea: Tennyson's line from 'Locksley Hall' is in the cultural subconscious of his countrymen. It was worth a pun to J.B. Thurston when he, Na Kena Vai - 'Spear Head', 'Bayonet' - to Fijians, had become Sir John, Governor of Fiji and High Commissioner and Consul-General for the Western Pacific. This line rang true to his surroundings on so many South Sea island beaches; but other phrases rang hollow as he looked around in September 1875. Never comes the trader, sang sanguine Tennyson, never floats an European flag. Traders and planters had long been in Fiji. And now the British flag flew, replacing the dove-with-olive branch motif of the independent Kingdom of Fiji.

King Cakobau's realm had gone down on 10 October 1874, to European rejoicing and Fijian despair. And Thurston, Cakobau's former Chief Secretary and the Fijians' champion in the fight to retain independence, was now even further from the security men begin to look for at his age. He was thirty-nine, but felt and looked older, sallow from years in the tropics. His manner was still boyish, though - too much so for his fellow European settlers. They expected from all mature men of their colour a proper deference to such well-established truths as the essential inferiority of black human beings to white. But if acceptance of these beliefs was essential to maturity, Thurston never matured. Psychologists have it that an individual's life can be divided into age-compartments, each with its own characteristic virtue. The young man's attribute is supposed to be fidelity, a capacity to adopt and maintain a stand. If this be so, Thurston remained young until he died in 1897 at sixty-one. He had taken a stand on the basic issue of relations between black and white in Fiji where 2,000 Europeans expected to rule 140,000 Fijians in the European interest. They could not do it without fighting, Thurston thought, and he did not give
much for their chances unless they were helped by imperial troops, as the Pakeha in New Zealand had been helped against the Maori. That had been a crime, he reckoned; and he had too many Fijian friends to want it repeated.

A short, slight, active and obsessive man, he lived so intensely that he could be prostrated by retching spasms when the pressure was removed. He paced his house at night, or sat feverishly writing, because he could not sleep; and his elderly wife perhaps presented no short-cut to relaxation. He concealed his thin skin imperfectly behind a flood of words. He laughed a great deal; when he was laughing at white men's folly in relations with black, Europeans did not find him funny. His humour was often bitter now, but that was not native to him. Fifteen years later, when Fijians were at last secure, his sense of the comic, his delight in droll re-creation of often tense situations, charmed an outsider to Fiji, the painter John Lafarge, as he walked with the Governor in the early morning on the banks of the Rewa River.

He had little reason to relax in September 1875. He could have kept Ratu Cakobau's independent Kingdom going, if the Commissioners from Britain, Commodore Goodenough and Consul Layard, had not commanded warships. Whites would have reconciled themselves to the government's insistence that Fijians were sovereign peoples, not just raw plantation labour - or they would have left the country; and the Fijian chiefs had at least promised they would work together. Force had altered the situation, and he looked on the change apprehensively. Favourable though he had been to British annexation if Fijians wanted it, he had sought conditions to protect them from his countrymen. He had failed, as far as formal assurances went.

Britain ruled unfettered. And her sons, expatriated to produce for her looms and sell her calicoes, her church-going daughters building families overseas, had certain natural expectations of her. Her policy must be to advance their interests, which were assumed to be Fijian interests too.

Romanticism had brought many of these settlers; that, and the high price of cotton in the late '60s, coupled with

1 John Lafarge, Reminiscences of the South Seas (London, 1914), 408.
the low price Fijians seemed prepared to take for their land in Manchester and Brummagem wares. What kept planters there was indebtedness. In the case of the merchants who financed them, it was the hope that, with British rule, rising land values would make it worthwhile to sell their debtors up. For many men there was a sense of time invested, as well as a feeling that six to ten years in tropical heat were not a good preparation for trying afresh somewhere else. And still romanticism kept a hold. As one planter-merchant put it, in some cases pride would not allow them to return to their friends, and dissipate entirely the halo of romance that surrounded a full-blown 'planter'; others again had become victims of the 'South Sea' or 'Pacific' fever, that peculiar fascination which Island life has for many men, and which has so strong an influence that a man of good education, and capabilities and one who could hold a good position in Society, a man who could make a living anywhere, will voluntarily resign all his opportunities and bury himself in a living tomb...²

Often these impoverished victims lived in despair, alienated from the surrounding black people. Even when white men adopted Fijian speech-patterns, took Fijian wives and acquired a genuine taste for yaqona, they were likely to go on insisting upon their separateness and superiority. Merchants like William Hennings, with his high born Fijian lady, charged Fijians double what they charged Europeans in their stores. There was nothing odd in any of this, Thurston thought; all white communities similarly situated felt the same.³ What was unusual was that he should feel differently.

As so much European poverty seemed attributable to Fijians' self-sufficiency, it followed to the settlers that the 'natives' must be dragged into the modern world. This might be done by a poll-tax which would teach them the dignity of labour by forcing them to work or produce for their

²Journal of J.L. Young, 11 October 1875, PMB; also on this theme, see my 'Creditors and the House of Hennings: an elegy from the social and economic history of Fiji', Journal of Pacific History, VII, 1972.

³Memorandum, c. December 1876, 76/1698.
tax-money. It would also benefit the planter, bone and sinew of the country, by providing a reservoir of cheap labour, and the merchant, by putting copra into his trade-stores at whatever price he felt able to pay. Fijians too would benefit. Commoners would be instructed in the rights of the individual and cease to be more or less willing slaves to their chiefs - though they would then have to accustom themselves to being slaves to new white masters. Like the Maori, Fijians must be accorded the full personal liberty of British subjects. Then they must draw water for the white purchasers of the land which they must be free, and freely encouraged, to sell. Only in this way could savages be introduced to the go-ahead Anglo-Saxon's age of individualism, the market and progress.

'We are all dying' - said Thurston - 'of "progress"'. One reason for his divergence from fellow Europeans was that they inclined towards colonial radicalism, while his experience of the hierarchy of the sea had helped make him an arch-conservative. He hated cant. And he found it exemplified in the settler slogans which set up British social values and institutions as the model to which, if they wished salvation, all peoples must conform. Racial amalgamation of Maori with Pakeha was the watchword in New Zealand, as he knew from sometime Fiji planters like the New Zealand politician, F.J. Moss. Thurston's own scanning of newspapers told him that amalgamation meant subordination of black to white values. It meant proscription of Maori culture, no hope for Maori autonomy, the right of the Pakeha to acquire Maori land - and the grudgingly accorded right of the Maori to acquire Pakeha skills if he could. All this was cant. His own way of life was European, but Thurston could see no great intrinsic superiority in his own culture - though he educated his adopted son, twelve-year-old Ratu Josefa Lalabalavu overseas. Ratu Lala would rule his father Tui Cakau's chiefdom in time, and his foster-father thought he should be instructed in the ways of a new, European-influenced age.

If it were European-dominated, there would be no meaningful role for Ratu Lala. All depended on the new Governor. If he were conventional, it was likely to mean a punctilious show of respect for Fijian rights - insofar as they could be accommodated to settler interests. There would be recognition of the vast European land claims, and alienation of

4Thurston to Thiselton-Dyer, 7 February 1894, Kew Letters.
more land while the *itaukei*, the owners, were pushed on to reserves; creation of the largest possible Fijian labour force; extension of direct white control and whittling away of all but a pretence of Fijian autonomy. The conventional view was promptly put to settlers by the new Governor. 'My sympathy for the coloured races is strong', Sir Arthur Gordon announced in June 1875, 'but my sympathy for my own race is stronger.'\(^5\)

Then there would be nothing for Thurston himself. From his mortgaged plantation of young coconuts on the northern tip of Taveuni, safe under Tui Cakau's protection, he would only be able to look with mordant humour on fired homesteads. Yet he could argue public utility as well as personal advantage for staying in office. His standing with Fijians had led Ratu Cakobau to tell Commodore Goodenough that he, the Tui Viti, could trust no other Minister. In September 1875, even so, the result of empty moral strictures passed upon Thurston's character by Goodenough appeared in the announcement of new appointments. Thurston was demoted to Auditor-General.

His enemies rejoiced, particularly the missionaries, who were delighted to see that opponent of Wesleyan Methodism in its exported form put where he could do no more harm. The Reverend Frederick Langham, Chairman of the Fiji District of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission, exulted: 'Here I sing the Doxology!'\(^6\) No longer could the man who felt that those with God much on the tongue should have their mouths washed out with soap, threaten the temporal authority sought by God's Elect. Nor could he prevent power in Fiji passing to God's chosen people. Hiding its relief at Thurston's demotion under an assumption of surprise that this Messiah turned Judas should be given any office at all, the *Fiji Times*, the settlers' voice, announced that he was doubtless to be used as a walking encyclopedia of Fiji's past but in no way allowed into the Governor's intimate society or, by implication, his counsels.\(^7\)

Although Thurston could usually simulate amusement at

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\(^6\) Langham to Chapman, 22 September 1875, MOM 103.

\(^7\) *Fiji Times*, 4 September 1875.
detraction, he was always hurt. He survived psychologically by explaining how ironic the attacks on him were, given the actual situation, his motives, and logic. Now he itched to reply. Overseas, the *Fiji Times* was often seen as the voice of Fiji. It needed silencing. Its recent insinuation that he had connived at the disastrous introduction of measles as part of his 'native policy' - an insinuation clear to contemporary readers - had shocked even Goodenough's coadjutor, Consul Layard.8

Reacting to the latest attack, Thurston sent the new Governor the first of many letters between them. 'I am not altogether unused to this sort of thing', he told Gordon, 'and I have happily experienced, sir, that slander and abuse do not, however well and frequently hurled, always bring down the intended victim.' Even so, it was not pleasant 'either as a private person, or a public officer, to be constantly held up by this journal to public ridicule, hatred, and contempt'. He itched to thrash the editor, he said, or bring him and his proprietor, G.L. Griffiths, into court. Dignity precluded the former course and financial prudence the latter, for neither man had a penny. He was concerned for his relationship with the Fijian chiefs, the Turaga. They were being assured by whites that their advisor was in disgrace for his anti-British intrigues during the Cession negotiations. Thurston told Gordon: 'I have no wish to lose the esteem in which I believe they hold me, and which has been the growth of years, but there is just enough distorted truth as to my change of office to puzzle them...'.

He had sensed this as he sat in the meeting-house down the coast at Draiba where the Turaga gathered to discuss the colonial future; and he knew that any doubt they felt about his position reflected fear for their own. They were clarifying issues in their own minds while trying to discover what was in the Governor's. Already the Tui Viti himself - Cakobau, the installed King, henceforth called 'Vunivalu' - had approached Gordon with the *tama* in token of submission. Ratu Cakobau's peers were concerned to know whether they must follow his example - and the implications if they did. They hankered still for the past, for independence; he, old, pensioned, assured of an honorific position in the colonial system, could better afford to set his face against repining.

8 Layard to Robinson, 3 March 1875, F1/22.
9 Thurston to Gordon, Monday Morning, Fiji, I, 184.
'Need I say to you, we are under Great Britain because we were indolent, fond of drinking and sleeping', he was to keep reminding the ruling chiefs. 'We thought the Tongans were a wise people, and so they are. They have done what we thought we could do also. They have a Government of their own. We could not, because we were not united.' His lecture was a lament, despite his personal resignation. His hearers, more vigorous because younger, more uneasy because less secured by guarantees of privileges, still feared for their position under British rule. Their decision for cession had been taken reluctantly, under pressure. Since then whites had been assuring them that their rank had no meaning now.

Denigration of Thurston had gone hand in hand with threats to Fijian society. Under colonial rule the commoner would be free to do as he - or the European - chose. Nigger rank counted for little in the eyes of British officials, and that little only insofar as it was useful in the process of transferring power to British hands. This attitude sprang from both social assumption and self-interest. As the chiefs talked at Draiba, though, they showed that it held attraction for the commoners themselves. 'There are two examples before us', said Enele Ma'afu, stronghanded Tongan ruler of Fijians in Lau:

One is the effect of the Chief's authority over the people previous to the time of our giving our country to Great Britain. The other is what has arisen and what we have seen in the land since that time. It is commonly called 'Vakaperitania' (British-like, i.e. every man is free to pursue any good or evil course, and upon him alone falls the good or evil consequences). If there was evil in the previous age, it had its origin through us the Chiefs; but most evils we were always able to put down, because the people feared and obeyed us. But the last twelve months have changed the whole face of the land; its evils are great, and through the doings of the disobedient the land stinks.

Stirred to put them down, Ma'afu had been met with the defence that theirs was conduct fit for this new white man's

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Notes of the Proceedings of a Native Council...at Bau... in...December, 1878 (hereinafter Bosevakaturaga).
age. As he said, this was mere impertinence; but should it become established that men were indeed free to follow their own minds, an end had come to chiefly authority. And yet:

our people will still be Fijians; in name only will they for a long time to come be British subjects. I fear much the good of the past was greater than the future good in store for us. When we and all Fijians of mature age are dead, and the children of this age and those yet to be born occupy the land, then they may become anglicized in nature, but it is not with them we have to do; we have to do with ourselves and our dark-minded half-wakened people.11

Lala, the chief's right to call upon his people's goods and services, was discussed. To a European, lala was an instrument of oppression - and the means by which a chief competed with the planter for the commoner's labour. As a chief knew lala, it was his means of fulfilling his main function. This was to mobilise the resources of people and land. Even while they recognized that men could not now be called on to repeat the great corporate efforts of the past - carving out canals, maintaining canoe fleets - the speakers at Draiba were in no doubt that they had been accustomed to use lala for the common benefit. They had kept the people supplied, for one thing. 'At that time there was no want of food in the land, as the people knew if we chiefs and our retainers had not sufficient food the club followed', recalled Ratu George Vakawaletabua, Tui Bua, reputedly among the most forward-looking chiefs.

If we cease to exercise the 'Lala' over our people their day of destruction is near. We all know our people have no desire to work, or to do anything for their own real good, and if we (their Chiefs) leave them to their own ways, their im-providence and laziness will eat them up.12

All chiefly power was threatened, said Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Cakobau's eldest son; yet how could its demolition benefit any man? In his own province of Rewa, said Ratu Rabici, Roko Tui Dreketi, many changes were discernible. Before

11 Bosevakaturaga, 1875.
12 Ibid.
Christianity, the customs had been most chieflike, the food prepared to celebrate any undertaking being given to the chiefs alone while the workers begged from house to house. This was now gone, yet the lala was not touched. "Other customs have been altered, but "Lala" remains unchanged, and it is a good custom when exercised by the Chiefs, but is often perverted by their agents." And young Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba, Tui Nayau, exclaimed:

Do away with the 'Lala' and the appearance of the whole land will be changed. Who of himself can build a good house? And who desires to see a town with nothing but small and bad houses in it? Whoever heard of a man who plants a garden by himself, and whose family always have plenty to eat? Do not we Fijians do things in companies? How could one man build his house, and plant his garden, and build his canoe and sail it all alone? To do this we must cease to be Fijians.\footnote{Ibid.}

This served as a text for Thurston. Chiefs were effectively the rulers of Fiji. For every commoner who argued 'vakaperitania' there were a hundred who would respond to their chief's call for revenge on the foreigner. Thurston lived in close touch with the Turaga still. His cottage was a place for them to stay when they visited Levuka. Much of his life was lived in dialogue with them. They talked about the place of women in society, Fijians' land-hunger, the new roles which chiefs must assume as a colonial aristocracy. To him they were guarantors of a society which it was both just and expedient to maintain, even if there were a practical alternative. 'No man dreams of making a garden, or building a house', he commented,

for the simple reason that he does not feel himself to have any individual existence. He is only one of a brotherhood or family, and can only think and act with its other members. His wants must be made known to his Chief, who discusses the matter with the qase, or old men of the village, and they decide what should be done. If a garden is to be made, or a house is to be built, the whole village assembles and the work is done. But for a man to attempt doing anything of the sort for himself is
from a Fijian point of view either ridiculous or insolent.... And I may ask 'If it is expedient, (as I contend it is) to let these ideas wear themselves out, why should we seek to change them violently (not that I think we can do so, but why should the attempt be made?) What useful end is served?¹⁴

Thurston knew he was contesting the spirit of the age. He turned to Mathew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*, and drew on its pessimism in an article for the *Fiji Argus* (successor to the *Fiji Gazette* which he had used to fight settlers in the old days). He was anonymous but unmistakable:

The fact is the relation of chiefs and people in this country is very imperfectly understood and there is also a morbid desire here to apply the prevailing sentiments of modern civilisation and liberty to the feudal and semi-despotic state which for years to come must exist among the Fijians. The central idea of English life and politics is the assertion of personal liberty. The strong feudal habits of subordination and deference is, it is true, not yet extinct in England, as witness the proverbial British flunkeyism, but they are almost dissolved in a sort of superstitious belief that an Englishman may do as he likes, meet where he likes, smash as he likes. These rights are the happiness of every Englishman. He sees other people in a state of society from which his race emerged centuries ago, obeying their feudal lords, and he is astounded at their indifference to what he calls freedom... He would welcome a Fijian apostle of freedom, a native Odgers or Bradlaugh - long may his welcome wait.¹⁵

If it should prove he was arguing against the feeling of the Governor too, then Fijians must expect the Maori's fate; and race-war would follow, he felt certain. The outcome depended on the personality and perception of Sir Arthur Gordon.

Arthur Hamilton Gordon was youngest son of the one time Liberal Prime Minister, Lord Aberdeen. He was a protégé of

¹⁴ Memorandum encl. Gordon to C.O., 29 April 1878, CO83/16.
¹⁵ *Fiji Argus*, 28 January 1876.
Mr Gladstone and Lord Selborne, who could write confidentially, confidently, to Secretaries of State and permanent officials at the Colonial Office. He enjoyed entrée to country houses, and felt at home in Westminster Abbey. A child of privilege, he was also a man of ability, imagination and more sensitivity than most. Yet he was curiously ill at ease in his own society, even though he ached to shine in it. He was an archetypical colonial governor - a Prospero among the Calibans in a way Thurston never was. He was not easily satisfied: the Viceroyship of India alone would have convinced him that his life had not been thrown away. Only very narrowly had his ambition to inaugurate a new colony prevailed over his friends' surprise that he should bury himself in the South Seas. Perhaps he only came on the promise that he should be not merely Governor of Fiji but also High Commissioner and Consul-General for the Western Pacific, responsible for all British official relations with, and British subjects at large in the islands under no European power.

One of his first tasks was to assess the strong man of the former Kingdom. Gordon had to determine whether Thurston's ability was matched by honesty. In personal memoranda he expressed no doubt on this, but he allowed some to appear in his despatches to the Colonial Office. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that he was jealous. In his attitude to the rule of coloured men, Thurston had anticipated Gordon. Gordon longed to be considered unique. A man self-absorbed, he retained a capacity for inspiring respect bordering upon devotion in others. He brought a train of disciples with him to Fiji. One, Captain A.E. Havelock, was made Colonial Secretary in Thurston's place — until the Governor fell out with him over priorities in race relations. Another, Dr William MacGregor, was hungry for any office he could add to his substantive post of Chief Medical Officer and, given to playing privileged ghillie to the laird, was ready to be jealous of Thurston as a competitor for the laird's favour; or 'like a large fish lying upstream catching every morsel that floats down, thus leaving me to starve below him', as MacGregor described him in 1887, when it looked as though Thurston would snap up the Administratorship of British New Guinea. When Thurston was decorated with

16 Gordon to C.O., 22 September 1875 (confidential), CO83/6; Fiji, I, 162.
17 Gordon to Kimberley, 30 July 1880, BM Add MSS 49245.
the C.M.G. in mid 1880, he told his sister that MacGregor was 'very much griped - didn't speak to any one for three days'.

Jealousy at first sight seemed unlikely to be aroused by the little man who received this high-minded, minded to be high-handed group when it landed in 1875; who showed them over the ramshackle offices built by Cakobau's Government, told them about Fiji, then watched them form their own opinions. Jealousy was hardly deserved by one so heavily attacked, about whose past so much was either understood to be dubious or was quite unknown. He felt it deeply:

alas! the charmed circle of 'men from home' doesn't 'convene', as the Yankees say, with my temperament. I cannot take my walks abroad in a road where the notice 'on sufferance only' stares one in the face at every turn.

Thurston lived under scrutiny. His speech-patterns were joked about - his habit of emphasis, for instance: he would say that a feeling 'vents itself in every shape and way'. His gait was analysed. A regular guest of his in the late '70s, young Baron von Hügel (out collecting for the British Museum), noted with a palpable smile how, as he walked up Thurston's steep garden to dine one night, 'Mr J.B. came stalking down, with his usual official step'.

Thurston was under double scrutiny that night; he was stalking to the jetty to meet the Governor, just landed from the final scenes of war in highland Viti Levu. Gordon was watching Thurston's reaction to a success of which he might have been jealous, as late head of a government which had itself claimed to have pacified the hills. Gordon decided he was genuinely delighted. His brother, however, would be upset, Gordon reflected, thinking of Harry Thurston who had fought in the Cakobau Government's mountain campaign and now, short, brash and erratic, was sourly regarded by the Governor as a bad edition of Jack. Having convinced Gordon that he bore no envy, Thurston stalked back to enjoy a good smoke and talk about Fiji with von Hügel. The young ethnologist's

18 MacGregor to Gordon, 17 July 1887, BM Add MSS 49203; Thurston to Eliza Morton, 19 June 1880, Perrins Papers.

19 Thurston to Gordon, 3 March 1879, Fiji, III, 534.

20 Le Hunte to Gordon, 1 December 1878, ibid., III, 452; Journal of Baron von Hügel, 3 July 1876.
gravity was again imperilled when Marie Thurston disposed herself informally full-length on the sofa. She always possessed a terrifying fascination for guests, with her possessive, protective love of her husband and the country, not to say her age. She was a grandmother, twice-widowed, when they married ten years before.

Host and hostess alike were to be respected for their commitment to Fiji. You could rely on informed talk in that drawing room, and were sure to hear how Berthold Seemann, author of the classic *Flora Vitiensis*, had muddled his botanical specimens — though Thurston told his friends at Kew he was indebted to *Flora Vitiensis* for many a pleasant day, even so. If, like von Hügel on ethnology, you had worthwhile comments of your own, you would be given general introductions to the chiefs. If you were an unwanted waif from Mauritius, like Anton de Plevetz, you would at any rate get a letter to drunken young Ratu Rabici of Rewa — who would repay this by calling early of a morning at Thurston's cottage with loud cries for cigars before making off to the pot-houses of Beach Street.

Thurston's walks abroad took him in a few downhill steps to Government House where Lady Gordon lived starved of gentle companionship. His own 'pretty little house' was a useful annexe to her over-flowing home for some months in 1876 while Marie Thurston visited her husband's sisters in New South Wales — Mrs Simon Zöllner of the corrugated-iron factory, Mrs John Morton, the country doctor's wife, and Mrs Henry Burrows, the brewer's lady. His letters to them show how little of himself he reserved from public affairs; he ate, drank, slept the South Seas, with no separation between public and private life. And he was always of interest to the Governor's wife. Thurston was 'a great man here', she said. He was uncommon useful too. An old seaman, he sailed the government's despatch-boat when her master deserted her. When the next master wrecked her, Thurston was the man to go looking for a replacement in Sydney. He had not been there for ten years. An expensive port of impractical vessels, he found it, but he coveted the market it represented. Already steam


22 De Plevetz to Chesson, 16 April 1877, RH BE MSS S18 C145/51; Thurston to Friend, 22 August 1876, 26 August [1876?], FCSO Rewa Provincial Papers.
communication with Sydney had created trade in maize worth £6,000 a year for Fiji.

He wanted more, and planned to annex the trade of the Western Pacific, channelling it through Fiji from Samoa and Tonga for a start; and he talked commercial men into attempting it in return for a subsidy. He was 'a most agreeable and clever man', to Lady Gordon; but her sense of propriety would not be repressed - 'no one knows what his antecedents have been'. His wife was 'rather clever' too, and could be agreeable, but in her case propriety knew precisely why it must disapprove: 'unfortunately she drinks, and one never can be sure of her'.

Jack Thurston prided himself on his strength in family affairs - especially in relation to his dependent young brother Harry. Perhaps he needed all the strength he could muster in his relationship with his elderly, brooding wife too, until she died on 14 December 1881, after a year of careful nursing following a bizarre accident. Thurston had returned home one evening to find an American bible salesman on his verandah. As he leaned on the rail beside Marie to profess polite interest in the man's unappetising, brashly illustrated wares, it gave way. Marie never recovered from the fall into the garden below. He laboured under deep emotion the night of her death, according to his one close friend among missionaries, A.J. Webb, whom he sent to for comfort.

When he wrote to his family in Sydney on his birthday early the next year, in the silence of the bare house he had just reluctantly built about the harbour at Suva, the new capital, he was full of the cruelty of death and the little comfort he could find in sympathetic words:

Marie, who loved me with her whole soul, lies buried under some palm trees not far from where I write - I, today, am burying the forty-sixth year of my life - a somewhat hard and busy life.

23 Lady Gordon to Miss Emily Shaw Lefevre, 21 April 1876, Fiji, I, 447; and to Mrs Ryan, 2 March 1878, III, 69.
24 Thurston's letters to Gordon, 1880-1, BM Add MSS 49204; MacGregor to Gordon, 24 December 1880, ibid., 49203; Thurston to Parkes, 16 July 1881, Parkes Correspondence; Journal of Rev. A.J. Webb, 14 December 1881, ML.
I am alone, entirely alone, and my home is silent, and, beyond myself, empty.\(^\text{25}\)

Only briefly, though: within four months of his move to this house it was to acquire a new ruler - Amelia, née Berry. She was a sister of the Fijian-shooting Berry brothers from pre-Cession days, and widow of D'Arcy Murray who had let Thurston fight settler expectations after Cession in his *Fiji Argus*. From her came the children Thurston craved.

First, there was his wife's eight-year-old daughter Nellie who was known as Miss Thurston until his own eldest was of age - generosity not to have been expected from a father with his sense of dynasty. His own first daughter, Eliza d'Este Arieta, god-child of the Vunivalu's formidable daughter Adi Arieta Kuila, was a subject of bemused adoration to her middle-aged father - which did not stop him, at forty-eight, when she was two months old, risking his neck in a heavy fall from the spirited horse he was inclined to ride, in his phrase, *ventre à terre*. At eighteen months she was declared 'too turbulent' to be bathed by anyone but him: 'if offended she is something tremendous'.\(^\text{26}\) After her came Alys Amelia, almost the cause of a breach of promise suit against her mother for not being a boy; but then at last, John Bates Horatio, Edward Thomas, and finally Basset who posed sailor-suited, musket in hand, beside their father's orderly, Peni Raiwalui of the Armed Native Constabulary.

Amid all this undoubted domestic bliss of the 1880s and 1890s, though, he was to be the same vehement man who had kept those around him up in what one called 'a high Eupyrian' of ethnological, botanical and genealogical theory in the years of his marriage to the well-remembered Marie. Botany was his one great relaxation all his life. He made it a hobby to scatter economic plants through the Colony - coffee, cinnamon, cocoa, all imported from Ceylon, Java or the Royal Gardens at Kew. In the days when he still lived at Levuka he kept healthy by tramping the inland valleys of Ovalau with the Reverend Mr Webb as a companion to testify to his charm when he was in holiday mood away from the continued needling of, say, the *Fiji Times* - which 'blunders into conclusions, or else lies wittingly, in order to please its supporters', and which published planters' letters arguing for absolute

\(^\text{25}\) Thurston to Emily Burrows, 31 January 1882, Burrows Papers.

\(^\text{26}\) Thurston to Emily Burrows, 2 January 1886, Burrows Papers.
Plate 2 Baba and Jack in mother's rickshaw on Government House verandah, c.1892.
Plate 3 Basset and Beni (Peni Raiwalui) getting ready for the enemy, c.1896.
freedom in the labour market. One such writer held, wrote Thurston to Sir Arthur Gordon (who rarely saw the relaxed side of him) 'that given certain conditions, a "healthy competition for masters and servants will be the order of the day", but... it is clear that he only looks upon the Fijian as a servant and upon himself as a master'.27

Whether in the Colony or on leave, the Governor was never free from the search-light Thurston played on the European community, made up as it was to his mind - well-versed in Shakespeare - of Bardolphins and Nymphs: like poor bibulous J.L.C. Payne, who drowned in an unusually high tide on Beach Street at the gate of his too hospitable host, merchant Gus Hennings, while fleeing imaginary bailiffs in a fit of delirium tremens. Thurston went in for scrutinizing others too, the court interpreters, for instance. Necessarily, they were mostly European youths brought up in Levuka, no place to learn Fijian. The Supreme Court interpreter, W.W. Thomas, was helping the Chief Justice give what some Europeans and all Fijians involved thought mighty queer decisions.28 The Chief Justice himself was not spared. He was John Gorrie, another raw and presuming Scot, whose career after he left Fiji ended in disgrace. He irked the dedicated layman in Thurston, with his seventeenth century precedents and stale procedural lore: 'I told my friend Gorrie yesterday...that Sir Matthew Hale was doubtless a dear old soul, and clever withal, but he thought witch-burning quite justifiable.'29 Formality after the style of this ancient jurist was no aid to justice in the Fiji Supreme Court. Take for example the case of a Fijian woman murdered by imported labourers, as preliminary evidence indicated; Fijian evidence broke down before wig and gown and the Polynesian prisoners were discharged. 'Probable result: the mysterious disappearance of a Polynesian or two ere long.' The law was an ass, as every Dickensian like Thurston knew.

No semi-civilised man, much less a comparative savage, can stand being taken into court and put by himself in a box, 'the cynosure of all eyes', - white men all round him, all glaring at him, - one awful man, in a 'sulu damu damu' [red dress], of

27 Thurston to Gordon, 13 October 1878, 17 August 1878, Fiji, III, 426 and 387.
28 Ibid., passim.
29 Thurston to Gordon, 17 August 1878, ibid., 385.
severe aspect, on one side of him,—another awful, bumptious, hectoring turaga in a mystical black garb, in front of him,—other persons, whom he had just seen clad in the white man's customary dress, entering the precincts of the court now arrayed in strange costumes. The fact that his own legal friend (the Attorney General) has become suddenly grey-headed, is not the least remarkable fact that the bewildered victim has to grasp; but when, just as he is about to falter out his first reply, the policeman in attendance roars out 'Silence!!' he breaks down, and becomes (for the time) an idiot, who can be made say anything, or contradict himself ten times in five minutes.30

Thurston was for prompt rough-and-ready justice under a tree with court-returns scrutinized at Levuka as a safeguard: 'no lawyer, no pomp and circumstance of any, even the mildest, sort'. And to replace Fijian magistrates with Europeans, as Gorrie perhaps wanted, would not only be disastrous financially but 'would quickly "wipe out" the former elders of the land.'31

Na Kena Vai was a functionalist, in anthropological terms. And he was going to remain as much the mainspring of the colonial regime as he had been of King Cakobau's government. That emerged as his policies to maintain chiefs in administrative positions, to protect them from their European creditors, to recognize Fijian concepts of law, and to guard the integrity of Fijian social life by keeping labour recruiters out of the village, for example, were accepted by Gordon. Fijians had never gone willingly to work for whites in any numbers, only at the direction of their bribed chiefs, as he never tired of saying:

I may exempli gratia—mention that the schooner 'Zephyr' was once bought by the Chief of Rewa, with the services of two hundred men for two years. These men went to Taviuni and Lau—they were paid some wages and finally the majority of them returned home. They were not altogether slaves—but they were certainly not volunteers.32

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30 Idem, 15 September 1878, ibid., 411.
31 Idem, 7 January 1878, 17 August 1878, ibid., 495, 385.
32 FCSO 76/1698.
These days they went pretty much as their families dictated - and in ones or twos, not in the tens planters wanted but had not the money to pay.

All this found a ready listener in Gordon. Even when the Governor was reassuring settlers, Thurston could feel confident what he said was only convention. He could recall the speech made by Gordon to chiefs gathered at Bau. It had drawn on a draft Thurston had prepared. No European commentators should be present, he advised; the good faith of the new dispensation should be reaffirmed, its continuity with their own government stressed; it should be explained that there was only a 'Provincial', not a full-blown 'Native' Office because the Governor intended to deal directly with people; and it must be emphasized that chiefly power had in no sense passed away. The speech would be carefully heard, dissected and discussed, he warned Gordon - and found the Governor responsive.33

Thurston willingly acknowledged Gordon as his master, in gratitude for the receptivity he encountered and the political salvation it afforded him. 'You have given me an opportunity to vindicate myself' - he told Gordon -

when men were bellowing round me like Bulls of Bashan, longing to stamp me in the dust, for no better reason than that I have done what I conceived to be my duty.34

Actually he had nothing much to learn from Gordon, having been broadside to broadside with the conventional wisdom in native affairs for nearly ten years. An independent Native Office was one of his bêtes noires, and so was the much-touted example of New Zealand. When Gordon became governor there in 1880 and wrote to say that even the Native Office, supposed defender of Maori rights, devoted itself to separating Maori from their land and culture, Thurston replied:

Having known personally men who took active parts from the date of Heki's war to the finish (so far as it went) of the Waikato business and heard all their yarns - nothing would surprise me. The true history of the Native Office in New Zealand -

33 Fl/Temp. 18; Fiji, I, 210-3.
34 Thurston to Gordon, 14 April 1880, ibid., IV, 269.
you know how I hate the name - would be one of the [most] diabolical and damnable histories ever written.

I once wrote to Sir Geo Grey when he was Premier and asked him if he would be good enough to send me any early printed papers from the Native Office that could be spared and that might be interesting and useful in a country going through a somewhat similar stage to that of New Zealand thirty to forty years ago. I never received any answer - so perhaps someone connected with Mumbo Jumbos charnel house blocked the note.

The records if well kept would be worth diving into -

We have a chance here of avoiding the follies and iniquities of New Zealand.

But unless the Governor here is supreme, and as I wrote to you in England two years ago - the whites are not allowed to come between him and the natives it is only a matter of time here also - hedge the Fijians round as you will.35

His good fortune was that Gordon too thought his paramount duty was to Fijians. The Governor had not fought creole planters in Mauritius over their treatment of labourers to look kindly on their Fiji counterparts; he had read Money's Java with its picture, so like Thurston's Fiji, of a people living under their own leaders producing for the market; and the relations between white and black in Fiji set him no real problem in self-alignment. He was revolted by settlers' assumptions that the land was theirs and the Fijians theirs too, for labour. He was charmed by Adi Arieta Kuila, and by Thurston's other close friend, Ratu Lala's father Tui Cakau, with his 'handsome Assyrian face'.36 Aristocrat among aristocrats, Gordon delighted to sit upon piled mats in chiefly houses around Fiji. He was conscious that he was unusual among European 'gentlemen' in his liking for the society of 'natives'; but however complacent in this, he does not seem to have made Fijians uncomfortable when they dined in return

35 Idem, 23 December 1880, BM Add MSS 48204.
36 Gordon to C.O., 1 October 1875, C0881/5; idem, 20 September 1875, C083/6.
at his table. He was as conservative as Thurston, different though their political allegiances and feelings about Mr Gladstone were; and, Money apart, Gordon had intellectual backing for the ideas about social change which, on his side, Thurston had arrived at by feeling and observation. Gordon's guide was the jurist Sir Henry Maine. He shared Maine's view of society as a functional, integrated whole. He felt the basic problem of colonial administration was well summed up by Maine's reflection that 'a barbarous society practising a body of customs' was 'exposed to some especial dangers which may be absolutely fatal to its progress in civilisation'. And he accepted Maine's antidote:

The usages which a particular community is found to have adopted in its infancy and in its primitive seats are generally those which are on the whole best suited to promote its physical and moral well-being; and, if they are retained in their integrity until new social wants have taught new practices, the upward march of Society is almost certain.

In Gordon's eyes, Fijian society was already well advanced upon that march. It was sophisticated and complex, self-aware, with all the recognition of and respect for rank so grateful to his own soul. Only time was needed, a breathing-space in which Fijians should make the transition from a kin-based society. And if in that time they were indeed to adapt, rather than become a broken, disinherited people like the Maori or the Australian Aborigine, the spirit of their own institutions must be identified. Then it must be embodied in legislation guaranteeing the fabric because rooted in that fabric's substructure.

37 Maine 'on the birth, life, and death of communities', as G.R. Le Hunte had it — to Gordon, 1 December 1878, Fiji, III, 454-5.

Chapter 2

'A thing that must grow upon the people'

Vakavita - 'Fiji-fashion' - was to be the guiding maxim of the government. And the dominant customs of the country and Gordon's personal inclinations, like Thurston's, coincided in vakaturaga, the chiefly way. What was to be the punishment for disobedience to chiefs? - he asked the Turaga in the speech Thurston drafted for delivery at Bau in June 1875. They showed their relief at their Draiba meetings next September. 'When I heard this question put at Bau my mind began to feel confident and hopeful for the future', said Tui Bua, 'for I saw that the Governor intended to govern us Fijians "vakaviti", or through us the Chiefs of the people.'

The upshot was the Fijian Administration, which confirmed the brilliantly erratic Ratu Colea and the narrow and grasping Ratu Epeli Nailatikau as masters of their chiefdoms - henceforth 'provinces' - with the title Roko Tui and responsibility to the Governor. Below them, linked by biennial councils, were district officials - Buli - who were also men of rank, ideally chiefs of the constituent Vanya, Native Stipendiary Magistrates and village heads - turaga ni koro. The structure was linked again to the Governor through an annual council of officials and men of rank, the Bosevakaturaga. Only in inland Viti Levu, where no sufficiently powerful hereditary leaders could be identified, were there European Commissioners; and though each province had a European Stipendiary Magistrate he was strictly enjoined to be gentle with his Fijian colleagues when they sat together. He was never to interfere with the Fijian Administration.

A Native Regulations Board, meeting at first in Thurston's cottage with oversight from Cakobau, decreed what kind of people Fijians were. They were agriculturalists who should plant a hundred bananas along with five hundred hills of yams, dalo or kumala in a year. They were members of a ranked society whose chiefs should deal kindly by them and, in return, Bosevakaturaga, 1875.
were owed obedience in all commands lawful at custom - on pain of up to fourteen days' hard labour or a two shilling fine. They were given to spreading malicious rumour, and to expressing resentment at fornication or adultery with the club.\(^2\)

So the Native Regulations Board of Ratu Marika Toroca, Ratu Isikeli Tabakaucoro, Thurston and Robert Sherson Swanston decided - not without a battle between these two enemies. Their relations had been hopelessly hostile since Swanston plumped for outright cession in March 1874. Now when Swanston attacked the fornication law Thurston protested that Swanston had himself once promulgated a far tougher measure than this; for though men were to be imprisoned, women, being only fined, could not be made a common resort in gaol as under former regimes. They disagreed on lala too. This was a source of wrong to the lewe ni vanua, in Swanston's view. It was best left unrecognized to die its inevitable death under civilized rule. Of old a chief dare not abuse his power for fear of losing his people, but now he could look to government for support while using the lala unmercifully. Such superstitions as the saving of turtle for the chief should be abandoned too, Swanston said. This and other liberal legislation had been introduced in Tonga where the rapid advance in social conditions over the past ten years might be attributed to the individual's being left free to do as he pleased.

These 'improvements' in Tongan law were more conspicuous on paper than in practice, Thurston returned. Swanston's argument was like that of most Europeans in the country. They considered Fijians as they thought they ought to be, not as they were. Lala was simply a service tenure in a form familiar to all men in the early stages of society, said Thurston, and the notion that a chief had ever been careful to conciliate his people by benign rule was 'a mere attempt to graft a civilized idea upon a barbarous stock'. Quite recent chiefs had been in the habit of launching canoes over living men - their own men, not captives.

Sentiments might have been uttered at...Draiba which were the sentiments of a class but what if it were so? Are not the meetings of White men generally productive of class sentiments? The Chiefs at all events proposed that 'Lala' should be restricted to House building, planting, feeding

\(^2\)Regulations of the Native Regulation Board 1878-1882 (London, 1883); R.S. Swanston, Journal, March 1876, passim.
strangers, cutting and building canoes, turtle fishing and local public works.

To define is better than to ignore... Among no people can violent and sudden changes of laws and privileges be effected and least of all among a people just emerging from barbarism.3

This argument - the merits of speeded-up modernisation against conservatism and respect for a living system - still continues today. Because Gordon ruled and Thurston was cogent, the right of the system to change at its own pace was respected. And Swanston, as European Stipendiary Magistrate for Kadavu, recorded the commoner's lament that, with government sanctions behind the chief, he could not eat his own pig at will.4

The administrative system set up was strictly in accordance with Fijian practice, Gordon assured his own superiors. It must be, if Fijians were to survive as a people. How faithfully it mirrored Fijian usage would emerge as the Rokos ruled, councils deliberated, Fijian Regulations were applied, and people responded. At least it was clear from the beginning that a great deal of provincial autonomy was assured. Provincial rates were struck, provincial vessels purchased. The life of the land ran on along Fijian paths. Not a lot of the structure was novel to Thurston. Nor was it new to the Colonial Office, which had to sanction it - but it was unwelcome. Currently the Secretary of State was planning to dismantle a similar system in Natal because it made for an African, not a British colony.5 In the end, Downing Street accepted Gordon's proposals, with the reflection that Fiji was at once a showplace and unimportant. 'The Native

3 Minute, 22 March 1876, FCSO 76/1699.
4 Swanston, Journal, 29 June, 29 September, 1 October 1877; Swanston to Havelock, 11 October 1875 (private), FCSO 75/170.
5 Gordon's despatches are in C083/9. They have been analysed in J.D. Legge, Britain in Fiji (London, 1958); again with less admiration by one who knows Fiji, in Peter France, The Charter of the Land (Melbourne, 1969). My 'A Roko Tui for Lomaiviti: the question of legitimacy in the Fijian Administration 1874–1900', Journal of Pacific History, V, 1970, tries to show what actually happened when precepts were applied. And see also, below, passim. For Natal, see C0179/116, and Carnarvon to Pine, 3 December 1874, Natal Government Gazette, 26 January 1875.
policy was, as you have anticipated, rather a large pill to swallow', Gordon was told privately by R.G.W. Herbert, Permanent Under-Secretary,

but we have swallowed it bravely in order to give you the chance of proving that you can govern the natives instead of killing them off. Do not however, check white settlement more than you can help.6

Probably it was on this that the pill had come nearest to sticking. Not only did the native policy include examination of European land-titles in a spirit of scepticism, rather than easy tolerance; it also provided none of the expected spurs to Fijians to work for planters.

The Fijian was to pay his taxes in produce from his own land. He was not to be obliged to seek cash by working on a white man's, after the normal pattern of colonial rule in tropical colonies. He was to be recognized as a landed proprietor, not forced into becoming a wage-slave. 'His wants are few', Thurston's characterisation ran,

and he is indisposed to sustained labour. He also prefers the presence rather than the absence of his wife and children, and the cultivation of his own qali land is infinitely more interesting to him and more in accordance with his proclivities, than the cultivation of a stranger's land distant a hundred miles perhaps from the place in which he was born.7

The scheme of taxation which followed from this premise was, again, something that had been tried under the 'much maligned government of Cakobau' - as Thurston wryly called it. While it pleased Gordon to claim the scheme at his, Thurston was left free to hold his own reservations about that - and to put it before a dubious Executive Council. Then in January 1876 he championed it through a Legislative Council which needed reassurance that commerce would not be ruined. He was gently amused at mankind's foibles, mildly astonished at its difficulty in seeing beyond immediate self-interest.8

6 Herbert to Gordon, 9 May 1876, BM Add MSS 49199.
7 Thurston to des Voeux, 25 November 1878, FCSO 78/1748.
8 Speech encl. Gordon to C.O., 16 February 1876, CO83/9.
With an official majority behind him, he was assured of success. In the words of the Secretary of State, Fiji was now a Crown Colony of a rather severe type. Its Auditor-General had none of the need to seek votes which had bedevilled him as the Kingdom's Chief Secretary. Even so he wanted to win the business community's co-operation. This might be achieved by convincing the three official members. Two were his friends, though hardly political supporters, the merchants Gus Hennings and J.C. Smith; the third was the planter Rupert Ryder, with whom his differences had never broken out in personalities. He addressed himself to these three, well-knowing what their constituents wanted.

Planters especially had the time and inclination for bitter correspondence which resulted from rusting cotton-gins and young coconut-palms that would not bear for years. The Ra planter R.B. Leefe, another acquaintance whom Thurston could meet socially, even employ, without their ever agreeing about the proper place of Fijians, had presented his view that the only way Fijians could contribute to the colony's well-being was by working for white men. Sustained labour was foreign to the Fijian habit, but without it the race must perish. A money-tax would provide the stimulus; to earn it Fijians must work for planters; and this would also lead to the individual's accumulating personal wealth - 'one... of the first lessons of civilization'. The tax should be collected by police-magistrates stationed at thirty-mile intervals around the coasts, in case the individual should not learn his lesson voluntarily. 'Nothing else but a little wholesome compulsion will ever make a useful laborer of the Fijian' - so wrote one of the original planters, Jacob Storck, whose own idleness made Thurston chuckle. Fijians 'will never make the Colony'; government must help planters to do so by increasing the Fijian labour supply. Institute a poll-tax of £1 for adult male Fijians, agreed the Rewa Planters' Association. Fijians on the river's lower reaches could earn this in five weeks on plantations there; if people upstream had to travel down, this 'bringing the tribes of the interior into communication with the settled districts is the greatest civilizing power Government can foster...'.

9 Leefe's memorandum, 29 June 1875, Fl/Temp. 18; he relates his history at WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 1900/99.
10 Fl/Temp. 18.
11 Rewa Planters' Association to Gordon, 17 July 1875, Fl/Temp. 18.
Thurston doubted it. 'Experience teaches that natives have never as yet made any money by working as labourers for Europeans', he had already assured his government colleagues. 'Very frequently after working upon a bankrupt plantation for twelve months they have to find their way home penniless...'. And if, as Colonial Secretary Havelock pointed out, a Fijian could raise money by selling his own produce to traders, it was equally true that this dependence on white middlemen would 'keep his nose to the grindstone forever'. A Fijian would 'not only continue the hewer of wood and drawer of water - the inferior race - but he will I fear become more inferior every decade'. Fijians had not learned the value of money, or much else, in their dealings with traders. 'If our Fijians are forced into an industrial school we shall probably save the race - and certainly make them a reputable people so long as they last. If they are left to themselves and the traders (who live by robbing them legally) we shall only have to deal hereafter with a half-vagabond and half-criminal population.'

Why not utilise Fijian society? He quoted the Native Commissioner, David Wilkinson, who considered lala the 'key-stone of the Chief's government and authority over his people'. Thurston thought it good policy to use this right of the chiefs to command garden-planting, for instance, in a way that would benefit people and government too. Let the Legislative Council annually assess the sum to be paid by each province; let a board of assessment divide the burden among the provinces according to manpower and fertility; and then let the tax be paid in produce. Government would sell this by tender, refunding to the producers any surplus over the sum assessed.

'I am well aware' - Thurston told Legislative Council - 'that the system of receiving or making payment of rent as taxes in kind...has long been abandoned in all, or nearly all, parts of Her Majesty's possessions'; he was 'equally aware that an attempt to argue the advantage of a return to such a system is...calculated to call forth the censure and opposition of a very large portion of any British community'; but he could not see why government must apply the 'exact test of our European politico-economical square and plumb-line'. In respect of native policy generally, he could

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12 Minute, n.d., early 1876, FCSO 76/1701.
13 Memorandum encl. Gordon to C.O., 16 February 1876, CO83/9.
14 Speech encl. ibid., for these and following quotations.
not understand 'how the practices or principles of highly civilized states of society can be generally applied to all conditions of mankind throughout the world' – this was the 'mistake that has always been made here'. One or two generations must pass before Fijians could reasonably be called on for taxes in cash. He had been told that his proposal was 'un-English', would never be condoned by the Colonial Office, would make a slave of the Fijian commoner, and that it would prevent Fijians from sharpening their intellect by dealing with traders – 'sharp dealing, I presume'. The Colonial Office had ordered a similar system in South Africa thirty years before. As to infringing the 'liberty of the subject' in preventing him from selling much of his produce to traders, Thurston thought 'liberty', 'freedom', were relative concepts:

I know, Sir, there are many people who think that the Fijian, who has been a slave to the will of his Chief all the days of his life, should be made free, as they term it. Such a thing, in its full sense, is impossible. Perfect freedom is a thing that must grow upon the people. Freedom from control is another thing; and it is this sort of freedom that is generally meant. In this sense, I may ask, Free to do as he likes? That, for a Fijian, means, first, to do little; then to do nothing; then to disappear from the face of the earth, killed off by an excess of freedom and mistaken kindness. As to another liberty – liberty of commerce: Well, Sir, does it interfere with the freedom and liberty of trade? I think not...Properly speaking, freedom of trade can only be said to exist when there is something in common between the parties, some common proportion of ability and experience; but, as a rule, freedom of trade generally tells, not for, but against a native...Sir, the mission of the civilized man to the semi-savage is pretty much the same all over the world. It is to overreach him in business, and to overcome him in war! His 'freedom of trade' is not the liberty to trade with, but upon him.

In the stores the two-price system bore him out. The same article was priced at one figure for a European, at a higher one for a Fijian. Added to this was the profit margin which traders gave themselves by buying produce from Fijians in trade, not cash. As he assured the Legislative Council,
savouring the balance of his sentences:

To demand a tax from the native is to ask of him that of which he has least, and that which it is most difficult for him to obtain. It is neither to consult his means nor his convenience. To demand money, is also to force, for the purposes of taxation, a large and ignorant native population into hasty and unfair relationship with the intelligent and astute European. It is to compel the native to deal upon a system of which he knows little, and to put his trust in weights, measures, and coins of which, if possible, he knows less. To do this, Sir, is, according to my view, to convert the Fijian into a mere tax paying machine. A machine for the sole purpose of grinding out a given number of pounds, shillings, and pence per annum; but whose grinding power will yearly become less and less, until it may be expressed by a cipher.

Above all, the Native Taxation System would make Fijians producers for the market, where now they were gatherers. Currently they grew only yams, dalo and so forth. For the rest, the Fijian simply sold 'so much of the natural productions of his forest or seas as he can with some little labour collect'. 'He lives upon his principal', said Thurston, 'and burns as it were his candle at both ends.' The banks of the Amazon showed what would be the outcome of this, almost denuded of their natural-growing resins, oils and dyes. Already the same was happening in Fiji. 'As Roko Tui Ra said lately at Draiba, "of beche de mer there will soon be none, for the drying-houses encompass the whole land".' Taxation in kind would put the colony's natural resources under control. It would stimulate the growth of new products and the utilization of plants that now grew wild. Eventually sugar might be produced on a big scale; but this would require large mills, inducements would have to be offered to investors, and questions requiring special treatment would be raised.

Thurston won his vote. He was helped by his known concern for Fiji's commercial future and partly, no doubt, by lobbying beforehand. He had no need to remind J.C. Smith that he himself was intimately involved with that future, for Smith was Thurston's mortgagee on Naveitalacagi, the plantation he hung on to out of sentiment and as some form of security; but probably he had drunk one brandy-and-soda to Gus Hennings'
three while he talked about the supply of copra, cotton, candle-nuts and other merchantable products that would steadily fill the successful tenderer's warehouses.

And as tenders came in at the beginning of each year he had tangible evidence of the scheme's advantage to Fijians, in the higher prices that merchants, in competition, were forced to pay. Copra prices now averaged £10.10.6 a ton, for instance; stores had hitherto paid £5 - in trade.15

Management of the tenders was all his, business additional to the normal duties of the Auditor-General. For years his day began at six in the morning and continued sometimes until after midnight. He dealt with the business of a general commercial man and plantation-manager combined with that of a shipowner: he argued that government's possession of the schooners Barb, Zephyr, and Isle of Beauty was necessary, as contractors' own shipmasters had pilfered in the early days. Employing several of the ruined planters who had been his opponents, Thurston sent out cotton seed for the provincial authorities to plant. Other emissaries planted coffee in highland Viti Levu. He had all the frantic worries of distressed merchants to beset him when the price realized overseas on a comparatively unknown article like the candle-nut failed to reach the contract price. He had to check the incautious enthusiasm of, for instance, Roko Tui Ra who sent people thirty miles inland in search of bush produce when cotton failed from bad seed and drought. As Thurston told Gordon in September 1878:

At the present moment, I am up to my eyes in work, and have, in addition to Barb and Zephyr, two vessels chartered. They are in and out every day, and of course everybody has to be driven a little, but so far things have worked smoothly. Three vessels came in yesterday - two late in the afternoon, and one, Barb, at 8.30. That took me out for the second time after leaving office. On return I was so tired that sleep captured me in my chair, and I only awoke at daylight. This and three hours work in the office this morning (Sunday) has rather knocked me up. On the whole, however, I am not uncomfortable about native taxes.16

16 Thurston to Gordon, 15 September 1878, Fiji, 111, 412.
Chapter 3

'The civilized man overreaching the barbarian'

He was uncomfortable about himself, even so. Until he became unconfirmed Colonial Secretary in mid-1877, he was only Auditor-General, though he saw to much of the work of the Receiver-General (for which office MacGregor received £500 a year). He always did some of the Colonial Secretary's work too, along with multifarious miscellaneous tasks which came to him as the encyclopedia of Fiji. As Wilkinson once remarked, he might be the egotistical, overbearing man MacGregor said, but he got the work done.1

But Thurston was compromised by old enmities. He trailed Fiji's immediate past behind him, more dangerously than other old hands because he had exposed himself more and he would not shelter from the past's implications. He still communicated with former associates - adventurers like James Harding, his Commissioner for Ba under the old government, and G.A. Woods, his colleague in Cakobau's Cabinet. He helped Harding get passage to Apia. There (it emerged) Harding was to join Woods in one of the commercial speculations with political undertones which complicated the affairs of Samoa after the egregious deportation of the American adventurer Colonel A.B. Steinberger, President Grant's special commissioner, in 1875. Harding was 'my man', Thurston explained, 'and as I know from experience loyal when his word is pledged'.

In no way could he regard Woods as 'my man'. Even so, he thought Woods greatly maligned. He sought jobs for him, and was the aggrieved Woods's channel to Gordon in 1877 when Woods got wind of a despatch to the Colonial Office repeating a facetious rumour that Woods was joining the almost legendary Captain 'Bully' Hayes in a new filibustering descent on Samoa. Woods's letters about Samoan affairs came in regularly to Thurston. He was kept informed too by William and Gus

1 Wilkinson to Gordon, 29 March 1879, Fiji, III, 556.
2 Thurston to Gordon, n.d. [1877], BM Add. MSS 49204.
Hennings, through their business contacts, of the preponderant German commercial interests' reactions to successive offers from Americans of protection and services to the Samoans.³

If he felt any sympathy with Steinberger he kept it to himself, though the parallel was there. Steinberger too had been overthrown by a British naval officer, and like Thurston he had been more acceptable to Samoans than to the white community.⁴ In 1886, when Thurston had to make recommendations for the continued existence of Samoa as an independent Kingdom, he was to find Steinberger's constitutional arrangements a good model. In 1878, lately made Secretary to the Western Pacific High Commission, he was more concerned with what national backing might lie behind Steinberger's would-be successors. 'Probably the United States Government - *qua* Government - has nothing to do with the affair', he thought as another Civil War veteran, General Bartlett, arrived at Apia in U.S.S. *Adams* to seek Samoan employment:

but, as in the days of Grant, some few vagabond adventurers have to be got rid of, and a national ship is employed to carry them to the scene of their operations. I do not think that the existing state of things in the Western Pacific is fully appreciated in America... The Pacific is to most Americans what the Spanish Main was to the men of Bideford three hundred years ago.⁵

It all reinforced his wry view of mankind. Here was Robert Swanston being exiled as Deputy Commissioner to Apia, only to meet ghosts from his own past. Assistant there to the American Consul in the late 1850s, Swanston had helped to sell up a fraudulent merchant who had once been American Commercial Agent. Now, with the High Commissioner's Court established, the merchant was suing for revenge. Thurston damned Swanston with faint praise, and relaxed a little in the quiddities of commercial and international complications to escape his nagging reflection that he was almost as much misunderstood as Woods.⁶ He was involved with the Lands Claims Commission. He regretted its slowness and felt some

³Ibid.; idem, 8 December 1878, *Fiji*, III, 465; for Gordon and Samoa, see my *Fragments of Empire*, Chapter Four.
⁵Thurston to Gordon, 23 July 1878, *Fiji*, III, 371.
⁶Idem, 369; idem, 17 August 1878, ibid., 385-6.
of its procedures were unfair - as certainly they were inexplicable - to Fijians. He defended to old acquaintances among the claimants the decisions which, in the end, restored much land to the Fijians. On one of the first claims heard he wrote a satirical Minute to serve as guide to the general character of European titles to land, and laughed at what the Commissioners' reports revealed about "inadequate consideration", mala fides, pressure of war, knavery - and an absence of reason.7

As Acting Consul, though, he had engrossed some of these land-deeds himself; and his own transactions were under review, among them his old plantation at Bureta. It seemed clear his brother Harry, his manager for a time, had misled the present claimants about the boundaries; worse, the record represented Cakobau as saying Thurston stole the land though the Vunivalu had in fact named Consul Pritchard, the original purchaser.8 There was more embarrassment over the Wainunu block which Thurston had sold to Lieutenant E.C. Chippendale, R.N. Whether or not it seemed strange to Thurston's colleagues that, as Acting Consul, he had purchased this land from a settler to whom he had awarded it as a fine against Fijians, he confessed himself much relieved when his purchaser was safe.9

While Gordon was on leave in 1878-79, G.W. des Voeux came from Trinidad to act as Administrator, and Thurston found himself openly attacked over other people's land claims. The Wesleyan Mission joined with dispossessed lay claimants in challenging the Commission's reading of its deeds to the Binner estate at Levuka. This was made up of valuable sites that the Mission had taken over - in return for an annuity which it begrudged - from the widow of its school-teacher at Levuka who had been a land-speculator and trader. Foreshore was the issue, the missionaries claiming from high to low watermark along half the beachfront. Their deeds showed it, they said; they had been in possession at Cession; and the government's object in excluding foreshore from the title it offered was not to protect Fijian and public interests but sheer

7 Note on Wilkinson's 18 November 1878, FCSO 79/54; Thurston to Moss, 22 January 1880 [actually 1881], Moss Papers, AMIL MS.215; Thurston to Gordon, 3 March 1879, Fiji, III, 535; idem, Sunday, BM Add MSS 49204.
8 LCC P74; Thurston to Gordon, 20 June 1881, BM Add MSS 49204.
9 Thurston to Gordon, 19 January 1878, Fiji, II, 692.
aggrandizement. If government wanted to fight, the Elect of God could remind it that their deeds had been accepted as basis for a survey years before, in one of his several previous roles, by the chameleon-like Mr John B. Thurston who as Colonial Secretary now disputed them.10

It was the colonial government's established policy (as it had been that of the old government) to grant no foreshore, for reasons he explained on the claim of planter R.W. Keane: 'if he and others could stand upon what they are pleased to term "their rights" the unfortunate "nigs" as Keane calls them, would find their supplies of fish cockles and periwinkles cut off forever'.11 Now the Wesleyan Mission was fighting the battles of Keane and his like. The Wesleyans' claim was bad in itself. Binner's deeds were of the most indecisive character. 'The friends of the Mission cannot but regret to see such a case as this built up', Thurston assured Gordon (who agreed):

That a Mission to the heathen should permit one of its servants to be a land-jobber - permit him to buy up, for speculative purposes, the lands of the simple-minded natives he comes professedly to teach, - permit him to own and employ in trading small vessels, and to make use of the teachers and underlings of the Mission throughout the Group as advertising media, - is a scandal to the Society. Only one more stigma was possible, and that has been reserved for Mr Langham to attach to the Society of which he is the representative in Fiji.

Having secured, not only what Mr Binner bought for knives and pots from the native owners, but rather more, the Mission, in the person of Mr Langham, now seeks to obtain that which Mr Binner never bought and never had conveyed to him, but which, it is true, he sought to obtain by one of those acts of sharp practice for which, as a trading servant of the Mission, he was so eminently well qualified.12

10 See the Mission's internal correspondence in ML MOM 103 and 165; and encls des Voeux to C.O., 19 August and 16 September 1878, C083/17.

11 Minute of 25 February 1879, FCOSO 79/316.

12 Thurston to Gordon, 18 August 1878, Fiji, III, 388.
As he put it in his memorandum demolishing the Saints: 'the transaction can only be regarded as another, and an unexpected, instance of the civilized man overreaching the barbarian'. Foreshore was common property at custom. It could not be sold. What the Mission claimed to have had in exclusive possession had actually been, according to the state of the tide, alternately a common highway and beneath the sea. As for the survey he had made while he was clerk to Consul Jones, part of the block as he laid it out had been contested by Tui Levuka. The witnesses produced by the missionaries, as Thurston had later discovered, were, all but one, strangers from outside Levuka. Messrs Frederick Langham and Lorimer Fison, who represented the trustees, must do their homework better.13

'Fison made me a friendly call on Saturday', he recorded a little later. 'I almost fancy that he wishes himself out of the dispute...'.14 The Brethren were in trouble. Their own Joseph Waterhouse, who had interpreted for Binner, was throwing doubt on the claim. An opponent of the white elitist Langham on the question of the status of Fijian Ministers, Waterhouse let it be known that he had almost been prevented from seeing the 'remarkable document signed by Messrs Langham and Fison'. Their claim was 'unrighteous', Waterhouse said roundly; high water-mark was certainly the boundary intended.15

The Brethren were also in trouble on wider issues, like the conduct of the Reverend S.W. Baker, Chairman of the Tonga District and principal adviser of the aged King George Tupou I. Fount of constitution and laws for the Kingdom of Tonga, Shirley Baker had enough energy to remain a good servant of the Mission too. His systematic raising of a subscription by taking Tongan promises to pay a certain sum in copra, then passing the obligation on to J.C. Godeffroy & Son, was evidence of this. The Brethren had accepted the money and winked at the method. And while Baker was under scrutiny by the High Commission, another embarrassment struck the Mission on its Melanesian frontier, New Britain, where the Reverend George Brown was levying war in revenge for the killing of some of his Fijian and Tongan teachers.

14 Thurston to Gordon, 15 September 1878, Fiji, III, 412.
15 Waterhouse to Chapman, 10 February 1880 (copy), FCSO 80/1466.
Thurston thought this was 'a new phase in Mission history, and will call forth some singular and interesting comments'. He was anticipating such an enchanting Levuka street play as the discomfited Fison had to endure two days later: 'Half intoxicated planter: "Good morning Mr Fison. I say what a brick that man of yours at New Britain is! Didn't he polish off those niggers".' In his relish, Thurston forgot the death of his Rotuman friend Riamkau, killed in a religious war, as he wrote: 'The Wesleyan Mission, as a clever commercial concern, and as a political power in Polynesia, I have been long acquainted with, but this is the first time I have met it in the character of Church militant.' This was one of the rare occasions when the consistency that made him so infuriating to contemporaries was shaken. He went on to admit sympathy: 'The precept to turn the left cheek when the right is smitten is not easy to follow; and had I been in Brown's place I am sure there would have been a fight before my coloured staff was "Kabobo'd" by the "Kai Peretania Vou".' He made his sympathy practical when Acting High Commissioner Gorrie was bent on making a resounding example of the militant missionary. Thurston's services in Brown's protection were even acknowledged by Langham. This reverend gentleman assured his superiors there would have to be conflict with 'our Govt folks' for their overweening attitude to Mission power and property, their disregard of Christian values - but the time, emphatically, was not now ripe. With 'this unfortunate Tonga affair' before them, with Brown, with Waterhouse leading an army against Zion, 'we shall have to bite our lips - and restrain our hands'. Langham led the way up that bitter path, breakfasted with Thurston and admitted to appreciation for the way 'my old enemy' had laughed Gorrie out of his plans.

Thurston made a lifelong friend in Brown when the latter did come to answer charges next year. He found the missionary no canting shark like some of his colleagues, but a straight-forward ex-seafaring man who knew the Pacific from Samoa to New Guinea. At the same time, he took care not to let Brown unwittingly help Langham to make capital out of his

16 Thurston to Gordon, 13 October 1878, Fiji, III, 429.
17 Fison to Chapman, 15 October 1878, ML: Correspondence of Rev. L. Fison 1873-8.
18 Thurston to Gordon, 13 October 1878, loc. cit.
19 Langham to Chapman, 9 November 1878, MOM 103.
discharge, retaining papers on the case briefly because 'it struck me Mr Langham wanted to publish His Excellency's remarks in Wednesdays paper and that would have made the CJ's position on Thursday and perhaps your own remarkably unpleasant.'

There was no way he could see to reduce the Mission's hostility. All things governmental were anathematized, including the tax system and the Bosevakaturaga. The chiefs' meetings were offensive because the Turaga were less than reverent about their white spiritual leaders whose time, they seemed to feel, was up. A painful scene flared between the blameless Ratu Ilaitia Toroca, head of mataqali Vusaradave, the Bati to Bau, and Frederick Langham, who abused Ratu Ilaitia for the blasphemous way in which he, the Chairman, the Qase Levu, had been spoken of at one meeting. Langham's temperament was much to blame, Thurston thought. 'Many of the missionaries tell me that they are quite opposed to Mr Langham; but...when it comes to a vote they side with their Bishop.' He believed they closed ranks from a well-founded sense of insecurity:

Their system, root and branch, is rotten - it is a delusion and a snare, and in their hearts I do not think there is a man among them who does not know and feel it. What tricks and dodges they practise to keep the game alive among the charitably disposed and wealthy ones of the world!

With the Fijian chiefs becoming increasingly hostile to white missionaries and blaming them for a proscription of custom that was often really the work of over-enthusiastic Fijian mission teachers, Thurston delighted in what he heard from Ratu Epeli Nailatikau about his tenant on Bau, the Qase Levu. The Mission was losing other claims before the Lands Commission:

After 'The Land Appeal Case' - L. told a knot of chiefs and people in Bau that the Matanitu had

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20Thurston to Brown, 14 November 1879, ML: Papers of the Rev. George Brown; his opinion of Brown is in Thurston to Chesson, 18 February 1886, RH BE MSS S18/C149/38.

21Bosevakaturaga, 1880.

22Thurston to Gordon, 13 October 1878, Fiji, III, 429.

23Idem, 7 January 1879, ibid., 493.
Plates 4 and 5 Polar opposites: (left) Reverend Frederick Langham, Wesleyan Mission Chairman, 'Bishop of Bau'; (right) Reverend Father Bréheret, Marist missionary and seafarer. Both photographed in the early 1890s.
tried to Vakasaurara [be aggressive to] the Mission by taking away (kovea) Niukaubi and Koro i loma. That it was an unrighteous and unholy thing to do - tyrannical - horrible &c. But like master like man. Like Government like Chief - Look at Ratu Abel [Ratu Epeli Nailatikau] - said Langham - he is acting vakasaurara in taking away a yavu down there belonging to the taukeis without any heed to their crying - These acts of Matanitu and Chief are displeasing to God and will surely bring their due punishment. Whoever exercises their power as Chiefs or men in authority - and whoever invokes such power to obtain land without consent of the actual owners is guilty of a great crime and are wicked and dishonest in the highest degree -

After a moments silence up spoke Jonathon [Jonacani Dabea] - Ratu Abel's Scribe - 'Mr Langham - why, if you think this, did you, in spite of the wishes and cryings of the taukeis, make the Vuni Valu take away Navuloa and give it to you? You begged it of him - you knew he acted vakasaurara, you knew, and we all knew that the owners of the land were 'rarawa' [resentful]. You let the Vuni Valu turn the owners out of their best gardens so that your vulis [teachers in training] shd have a place to plant on - Sa vakacei?

But Mr Langham walked away - and I find from Wilkinson that Jonathon never loses a chance of 'going' for Langham and generally gets the best of it.

Another day L. got Timothy [Ratu Timoci Tavanavanua] & others of the same kidney & held forth on the evils of the Bose Vaka Turaga and threatened them with interposition of Divine Providence. In effect he said the Bose was simply availed of by the Chiefs to bring together the prettiest girls in Fiji for immoral purposes. This and drinking was the chief business.

Already said Langham has Bau been burnt during the Bose at Rewa. Now it is destroyed on your return from Lau by a hurricane - and if you don't repent and worship God instead of your Matanitu - you will be swept from the face of the earth.
Upon Tim being asked what he had to say in reply he said that he had not been to Lau yet his house had been blown to atoms. There were scores of others in Bau who had never been to a Bose but they had been wrecked & driven into the streets. He, Mr Langham, had not been to Lau (he should have said Corinth) & yet the Church had been entirely unroofed & otherwise injured. In turn he asked Langham for a reply & got none –

It is very satisfying to find Langham accusing the people of regarding the Matanitu as their Kalou.

This was especially painful for Langham because Jonacani Dabea had been one of the best Fijians ever trained for the ministry. Still, the Qase Levu kept his mind closed. He went on approaching the Mercy Seat in the manner of Nehemiah, rebuildjer of Jerusalem: 'Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people.'

On Baker's being exposed for raising money in a fashion which had operated in Fiji for years, Thurston commented:

Is not all Lau indebted to Jew and Gentile traders for advances made to pay huge mission subscriptions? Was it not a reverend missionary who counselled the Israelite to go to Yacata and offer cash for the tax copra lying there, so that the not less reverend teacher, having preached at the poor wretches of natives for a month, had some reward for his toil, and was finally able to act as agent to the trader, and even store the plunder in his house, where it remained – until a Government officer, not seeing the joke, took it away and referred the Jew to the missionary for a settlement.

The Marist missionaries found Thurston very agreeable. Except for the young zealot Père Deniau, they took their cue from their Procureur, gentle old Père Brêheret who was always anxious to call Thurston his friend. They were resigned to being a minority group attending the souls of small

24 Idem, 21 March 1881, BM Add MSS 49204.
25 Nehemiah, V, 19.
26 Thurston to Gordon, 7 January 1879, Fiji, III, 493.
congregations or, at their most bold, proselytizing in the occasional Wesleyan preserve where a scrofulous foot for the curing, a lapsed Wesleyan teacher or dissatisfaction with the chief, might give them entry. At one point, Thurston's *bonhomie* gave them hope he might come over to the true faith. It was probably from one of the priests that he had another of the stories he liked, this time about the Wesleyan missionary at Vuna who, being approached by three Fijian couples to be married, sent them off into the arms of the Catholic church. He shared it with Gordon: it concerned the Reverend Mr Wylie heavy with luncheon lolling in his chair over a book - 'but whether reading Butler's *Analogy* or Huxley on *Protoplasm* I have not yet discovered' - and three couples waiting patiently upon his convenience until, it being found they had only two shillings each for the fee, they were sent away to get two more: and then, by rapidly-passed degrees, their joining, and marriage in, the Catholic Church.

Thus, in consequence of the combined effects of keen business perceptions and an over-loaded stomach, the Wesleyans lost at one sweep six members of its church (assorted sexes, as they say of sheep), and the sum of six shillings sterling. By all of which I mean that they will not dare to quarrel if they think we may turn round on them.28

One general complaint of missionaries, that government was too free with its regulations, Thurston would have been slower to accept than the Fijians might have been. He was the author of many Native Regulations and Ordinances. And he liked them Draconian. Mere non-recognition of transactions in land between Fijians and Europeans was not enough for him. He would have liked heavier penalties for suppliers of alcohol to those Fijians who had no permit; and he rejoiced when the Native Debtors Ordinance went through, for its restriction on the Fijians' ability to buy on credit 'has been damned here as worthy of the seventeenth century.'29

A fettering of liberty to enter into debt was proper in the Pacific, where traders vied with one another to put Islanders on the debit side of their books. It was never hard to do:

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27 Grosselin to Poupinel, 10 June 1877, *Annales des Missions de l'Océanie.*
28 Thurston to Gordon, 7 January 1879, *Fiji,* III, 494.
29 Thurston to Gordon, 30 March 1879, *Fiji,* III, 546.
The other day, Mr MacConnell of Vuna went before [Stipendiary Magistrate] Taylor with a lot of debts or contracts to register, the amounts being £5 in every case. I found that upon a Vuna native wanting 'tick' for a pound, the wily Mac had said, 'No; the Matanitu forbids us to sell you anything on credit unless you deal 'vaka turaga', and go up to £5. You can go down to Vuna and get four more men, and if they like to buy a pound's worth each, you shall have what you want.

Away went the man, and quickly found four others who would take a pound's worth of 'trade' on tick. Mac then obtained their signatures, and marched them off to Taylor in order to have the contract registered. Taylor asked for 'an opinion', and the Attorney General says they may, and ought to, be registered.

I shall, if this view cannot be set aside, ask leave to amend.30

When Native Regulations were in question, that permitting lala to be exercised by, or by consent of, a Buli was much attacked, as was the one referring to talaidredre, disobedience to the lawful commands of a chief. Having lost their command of the élite, the missionaries concentrated on the lot of the commoner, representing him as doubly oppressed - by the chiefs, and by the government.

This view was not without foundation, if the social assumptions of the undoubtedly grasping Ratu Epeli Nailatikau were considered. 'The work of the Chief is to live like a Chief', he remarked angrily when told people complained about his exactions; 'slaves only require a house, a bad one is sufficient - and if he has a mat - and a cloth [sulu] he has enough, any more that he can produce he should give - and he delights to do so - to the Chief'.31 The commoner did not habitually delight in it. Yet it involved delicate weighing of many variables to know at what point to intervene. Rank was a fundamental institution of the society the government had pledged itself to preserve. Yet the pledge was offensive

30 Idem, 10 December 1878, ibid., 466.
31 Quoted Eastgate to Col.Sec., 9 October 1876, FCSO 76/1417.
to the missionaries, for they regarded themselves as prime experts on matters vakaviti whether they approved of them or not, and were jealous of their standing. Not for nothing was Fison a correspondent of the pioneer anthropologist, Lewis Morgan; though he modified his views twenty years later when, supplying Sir James Frazer with material for The Golden Bough, he emphasized the divinity of chiefs, living embodiments of the Vu, the founding ancestors.

The government took action against ruling chiefs who misbehaved while holding government office. Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba was under suspension from his office of Buli Lakeba for oppression when he died in 1876; and in 1878 Ratu Rabici was suspended as Roko Tui Rewa for habitual drunkenness. These men of rank felt they held government office by virtue of birth quite as much as by receipt of the Governor's appointment. Their removal could be politically dangerous; and even against lesser men it did not always do to intervene. In August 1876, as he was launching the new Fijian newspaper Namata - intended as a government gazette and a gossip-sheet for the itaukei - Thurston particularly wanted straightforward provincial news, along with practical information for an agricultural people. At the same time, he wrote, 'I should like, if it can be done discreetly, to show up any vagabond chief who deserves it - provided always that the results generally would have seven out of ten chances of being beneficial.'

He meant the qualifications seriously. He would not have sympathized greatly with von Hügel's indignation at finding that a woman taken in adultery with a chief in government service had committed suicide (in shame at causing his disgrace, European Stipendiary Magistrate Eastgate naively supposed). Von Hügel felt justice had been perverted by the subsequent directive that magistrates should exercise more discretion in proceeding against officials who infringed the world code. In Thurston's view, on the contrary, justice had originally been manipulated by the chief's enemies in order to overthrow him, and the girl had probably killed herself in order to escape the abuse of the other women. As for Ratu Rabici, the immediate result of his disgrace was that he went round his tax-gardens urging greater effort upon

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32 Thurston to Friend, 11 August 1876, FCSO: Rewa Provincial Papers.
33 Journal of Baron von Hügel, 27 September 1876.
Plate 6 Ratu Neimani Dreu, Roko Tui Ba, photographed in the early 1890s. ‘Let the present Governor remain with us till we old men are dead ...’
his people - to their discontent - in the belief that Rewa's failure to meet its assessment was the real reason for his fall from grace and salary.34

Rank was reality. The talaidredre regulation was neither the origin nor the basis of hereditary authority in colonial Fiji, however freely the chiefs in a Europeanised province like Rewa might invoke it to keep their people obedient. Where authority was at risk from new solvents, as in this instance, Thurston felt no doubt that government must provide sanctions to maintain traditional authority. Fijians would otherwise become a leaderless, broken people. He sympathised with the Nadi chief, Ratu Neimani Dreu. To explain the flogging of youths and girls for going about shamelessly together, Ratu Neimani reminded the equally appreciative Bosevakaturaga: 'The well being of the people is safe in the judgement of the land.'35

There were other white contenders for the actual land besides individual planters and the Wesleyan Mission. The noisiest was the Polynesia Company, pressing its claim to 200,000 acres and banking and other privileges in the confidence that the colonial government would do it right. Had not its £9,000 relieved Cakobau of the American Debt? Had not Cakobau's own government, inspired by Thurston, treated it most shabbily?36 He enjoyed demolishing it: 'As a Company, the Company has never made itself manifest in Fiji'. Its purported purchase was a fraud:

That the Chiefs had not full power to dispose of the lands as alleged, is a proposition borne out by the fact that neither the power and diplomacy of the Chiefs, nor the power and diplomacy of the Chiefs European Advisers - nor of the two combined have ever been able to cause the actual native occupants to leave the lands alleged to have been conveyed.37

34 Friend to Col.Sec., report for November 1878, FCSO: Rewa Provincial Papers.
35 Bosevakaturaga, 1879.
36 A Remonstrance against the unlawful withholding of the Company's Lands at Levuka by H.E. Governor Sir Arthur Gordon (Melbourne, 1877).
37 Thurston's memorandum encl. Gordon to C.O., 5 July 1876, CO83/10; and others in Fl/Temp.20; and see, generally Anon. [J.B. Thurston], The Claims of the Polynesia Company, of Melbourne, examined and refuted (Levuka, 1878).
But this business was only on the outskirts of a major issue - the land question as a whole and more particularly, the rights of Fijians *vis à vis* the Crown in land either never, or, in the opinion of the Lands Claims Commission, not properly sold. Thurston was at odds with himself. He had helped draft the Deed of Cession, the fourth clause of which dealt with land: all land not alienated, or not in actual possession of chiefs or people or required for their probable further support, was vested in the Crown. This appeared to recognize the existence of Crown land, which could be sold. Having taken responsibility for the Colony's financial well-being along with the Native Tax Scheme, he was tempted to raise the wind by selling unoccupied land when the scheme was hit by drought in 1877 and 1878. Yet, 'probable future use and maintenance' - there lay the rub. 'What is required for their future use and maintenance, no man knoweth; and it is difficult to say when such requirements will be ascertained.' The certainty was that Fijians expected to be paid for any land sold as surplus to their requirements:

To give the natives some fixed proportion of the price for which land was sold by the Crown would perhaps be the quickest way out of the difficulty. A similar mode of extinguishing the native title (and the native) exists in New Zealand. The evil there is that common to all Parliamentary Governments, Ministers are not responsible to the Crown but to M.L.A.'s who, provided they get a good bone, or the shadow of one, will assist in working all kinds of iniquity.

In a Crown Colony things could be managed differently... As he found, though, Gordon opposed the sale of any Fijian land at all, and he accepted that at once, with relief. Whatever was to be decided when the land was actually apportioned to Fijians - general opinion held it eventually must be - the nature of their society should be respected and no haste made to issue individual titles.

38 Thurston to Gordon, 8 December 1878, *Fiji*, III, 463.
39 Idem, 11 November 1878, ibid., 441
40 Idem.
I think it extremely doubtful whether the early vesting of lands in the individual, as apart from the family, would effect anything but harm. It would...be better to confirm lands to 'the family' for the next generation or two. If a resettlement appears necessary, the question of the 'individual' can be considered with the light of further experience, but it is too soon yet to think of doing away with the 'family'.

Above all, law must provide that no land could be pledged against a debt.41

His reading and his experience of politics in Fiji had led him to one conclusion:

With all our 'highfalutin' to the contrary, the wrongs we have committed in the names of Christianity, civilisation, progress are manifold. We are, as a race, a race of robbers and spoilers.42

Fiji was to be the exception, a brighter page in the history of the British Empire. The British were to rule by Fijian consent; and indeed they had little option, dependent as the executive was on Fijian administrators who in turn relied on Fijian constables drafted from the provinces.

In mid-1878 when parts of New Caledonia appeared to rise against French rule, he was not slow to point the moral:

I was chatting with Le Hunte to-day upon the different way in which we have done things in Fiji. The whole native population here ruled through natives, at a minimum of cost (with a resultant, I hope, of a maximum of credit). Rokos, Bulis, Turaga ni Koro, and Ovisa, throughout the Colony - loyal, though, as a rule, ill-paid; and the native population there, - a cognate people, interdicted as 'd-d niggers' from entering the chief town. When Cakobau pulled by in his son Abel's gig, on his way to dine with the Commander of the Wentworth, the incident pointed my remarks, and gave me the most lively feeling of satisfaction.

41Idem, 10 December 1878, 30 March 1879, ibid., III, 466, 545.
42Idem, 27 April 1879, ibid., 561.
The policy in Fiji was right and honourable - and it would prove that a 'native race' could suffer colonial rule without extinction. No 'claptrap nonsense' about 'individual rights' and 'chiefly oppression' should be allowed to interfere. The days of miracles were over, it was true. 'We cannot make the uncivilised civilised à la première intention; but we can put the people in the right track, and must make up our minds to their being guilty of a few mistakes at the outset.'

In order to put them on the track, in order to keep Fijians from following 'in the ruck of other and somewhat similar races we have annexed, and unintentionally exterminated', European officials must understand Fijians. He told the European Stipendiary Magistrates so in a circular of November 1878. White officials must acquaint themselves with the precedence of chiefs, their rights of succession, relations with people, as well as the general rights of land tenure and the particular rights of true itaukei and vulagi. 'Officers may expect that their knowledge of these subjects will be tested after a reasonable time has been allowed for acquiring it.'

One of them - his private correspondent, the former mission schoolmaster P.S. Friend - was so perturbed by this prospect that he turned for help to Lorimer Fison. Fison was engaged in research which led him to the view that Fijian society as it now appeared was actually the result of the expansion of chiefly power at the commoner's expense. Where Thurston saw it as feudal, Fison applied the evolutionary theory of Morgan, and perceived the Fijians emerging from Stone Age savagery. The consequence was that no chief could alienate land. As an argument useful to the Lands Claims Commission, Thurston was ready to adopt it in public, though privately he saw something very like feudalism when men took the fruits of land to their chiefs.

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43 Idem, 17 August 1878, ibid., 384-5.
44 Idem.
45 Colonial Secretary's Circular, 1 November 1878, FCSO: Rewa Provincial Papers.
46 Lorimer Fison, Land Tenure in Fiji (reprinted Suva, 1903); in 1886, Thurston reprinted his own 1874 'Memorandum...upon the Ownership of Land in Fiji', which argued the feudal view.
Thurston's assumptions were too pat for Fison — his belief that questions of descent and precedence could be so readily discerned, for instance. And to a great extent, the continuing history of colonial Fiji was to be a contentious dialogue between the influence of the central administration, necessarily tending towards uniformity, and the local dynamics of Fijian social and political structures.

One thing at least was clear to Fison about Thurston's circular: 'The man who composed it must have been the very quintessence of a snob.'

47 Fison to Friend, 13 December 1878, FCSO: Rewa Provincial Papers.
Chapter 4

'The character alone has changed'

'Chiefs and people are alike happy', Thurston assured Gordon during September 1878 in one of his regular bracing bulletins on their policy:

The people are protected by the governing power, - petty chiefs are made executive officers in their own towns, - superior ones are Magistrates, Bulis, and Rokos, and aid in controlling the native population while maintaining their hereditary positions, the character of which alone has changed.¹

That was an important qualification. Resentment provided patterns in Fijian initiative and response.

The most spectacular were the inland Viti Levu disturbances of April-August 1876. A conflict with many origins, this 'Little War' was conducted against mountaineers who, hard-hit by measles and disliking the lotu seeping in from the coast, fell upon so-called 'loyal' villages. Local rivalries, long-standing scores between neighbours, between coast and interior, were as potent in determining alignments as any attitude to British rule. After August 1876, the interior sent representatives to the Bosevakaturaga to hear how the voice of the land sounded outside their narrow inland valleys - and to be looked on as backward savages by the coastal aristocracy.

Still, the voice of the wider land was often troubled too. One leading speaker at the Bosevakaturaga, Ratu Marika Toroca, heard its plaintive note when he went home to be received with magiti in his role of hereditary Roko Tui Namata. His matanivanua presented the taro, pigs and yaqona with the ancient formula that, if they were insufficient, the bodies of those who made the offering should be the supplement; then he added - 'This is a difficult time we live in: the Church

¹Thurston to Gordon, 15 September 1878, Fiji, III, 414.
is here and also the Government; there is nothing we do on a big scale.'

At the Bosevakaturaga talk followed similar themes: whether men were harder-worked than in the past; and how they should settle puzzling questions of behaviour in the colonial age and resolve the conflict of new with traditional ways. How differently must a Buli behave, compared with the way he would have conducted himself as a ruling chief in times past! - exclaimed Usaia Tavenakaica, himself a leading matanivanua of Namata, currently Native Stipendiary Magistrate in Kadavu. He illustrated his point vividly by describing a former Kadavu Buli:

The late Buli Nabukulevu was a great chief; the chief of the place named. In years in which he was Buli his lala upon the people was great. His house, his garden, the continual bringing of food to his house, was incessant. If he heard of a good pig at any place it was sent for, that he might have meat with his food [i.e. kana dina - 'true food', taro]. If the owner refused to give it up, it was probably killed on the spot and eaten. If there was any special or large root of yaqona it was sent for, if refused, it was pulled up. The people murmured, and refused to do his bidding everywhere, but he carried out his wishes through his own followers. The supply of food for his household came from every town in the district, and if they brought it without an accompaniment [of meat or fish], and something to drink with it as well, he was vexed with them, and sometimes became ferocious, and said and did monstrous things. For a long time he was supported by the Roko, who thought the people were indolent and disobedient. Finally, he became so bad that he had to be superseded...

In contrast, the newly-appointed Buli Tokatoka, a young man, told the meeting pathetically the present was no easy time for him. He could not have done his work, were it not for...

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2 Quoted from Matanivanua Niko Rabuku's notebook (parts of it said to have been dictated by Ratu Marika in 1883) by the ethnologist A.M. Hocart; see Hocart's fieldnotes, TL.

3 Bosevakaturaga, 1880.
the Roko's support: 'It would be much easier for me to be one of the people.' His own mataqali helped him maintain his house and food-garden, but when it came to tax-work he must mobilise all the young men; and they resisted him from, it must be supposed, his comparative youth but, above all, his lack of rank. 'They say they despise me, and are bad-minded towards me, because I push to have the tax made, to have corn planted, and cotton; and the planting of sugar-cane has become a kind of warfare.'

Men were faced with administrative duties that were foreign to them. They must fulfill them in accordance with rules they hardly understood - and often in circumstances of political difficulty arising from social embarrassment. 'I am like a small vessel sailing under the lee of a large one, not able to move, being becalmed by her' - so Buli Tavuki described his relations with Roko Tui Kadavu once out of the Roko's hearing. And this Buli, a man of rank locally, was in a stronger position than the Buli Moala, against whom the Moala people repeatedly laid complaint because he was not an itaukei in Moala. Strangers and Tongans were ruling the land, came a cry from Lau, and the true chiefs were sometimes set aside.

The Bulis especially were in fear, said Ratu Veceli Namusadroka, hereditary Vunivalu of Rewa, and Buli Rewa. 'We are afraid of the Government and its orders on the one hand, we are afraid of the Roko Tui and our duties to him on the other, and this creates confusion...'. And it was 'quite true, that many chiefs turaga itaukei, are at the present time small men, and all but ignored, who formerly were the strength and voice of the land'.

The institutional voices of the land - the matanivanua - had often been eclipsed by Native Stipendiary Magistrates. The rule of Native Regulations had replaced that of custom - Ka Vakavanua - sanctioned by the community personified in the chief and his matanivanua. The consequent loss in the smooth conduct of human affairs was acknowledged by some Native Stipendiary Magistrates who were themselves matanivanua.

4 Ibid.
5 Bosevakaturaga, 1878.
6 Ibid., 1879, et alia.
7 Ibid., 1880.
They uttered their personal lament - 'we had a name in the land, but this day men and their positions are ignored' - while the institutional loss was succinctly explained by Tui Bua: 'a Court is limited; vakavanua has no limit'.

When talk ran on reports of disaffection among the people, Ratu Puniani Vukinamualevu - the Bauan chief who held office as Roko Tui Ba - spoke. Rumoured rebellion was the stuff of Fijian life, he said; it had ever been so. Yet doubtless it was true that men felt pressed. He himself would rather be living quietly at Bau than ruling Ba where he was beset by labour recruiters demanding men, mission teachers admonishing him to give up time-sanctioned customs as ways of the devil and commoners who found that things were being done differently in other provinces and concluded that Ba was misruled.

What the chiefs revealed was food for government to chew upon. It was Thurston's role to ponder and act, while reassuring his colleagues that all would be the best that could be expected in an imperfect world if only the policy were maintained. The legitimate chiefs ruled under the eye of a fraternal - not a paternal - government which listened to their voices; and their people paid them the obedience recognized as their hereditary due. Fijians were under tutelage for what, he did not say; but the implication of all he did say was that Fiji would remain theirs to rule.

Part of the complaint was that their right to rule was in practice being contested; and he supported their complaint in his November 1878 circular to the European Stipendiary Magistrates. He rebuked them for interference with Fijian provincial administrators who, he reminded the Europeans, were responsible only to their own Roko and thence directly to the Governor. Tui Cakau, for instance, had been complaining that the European Stipendiary Magistrate for Cakaudrove was disagreeable to his Fijian counterpart. Thurston's own garden-oversers were always under attack. European officials came arrogantly into villages, Fijians

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Thurston to Gordon, 17 August 1878, *Fiji*, III, 387.
11 FCSO: Rewa Provincial Papers.
complained, assumed airs, and demanded entertainment appropriate only to chiefs.  

Another Fiji had scant respect for new institutions like the Bosevakaturaga - the old Fiji of gods and legendary heroes. Their exploits were often retold with biblical accretions now, but they were understood to look with contempt upon proceedings which, like those of the Bosevakaturaga, were in part validated by propitiation through prayer to the white man's god. Two heroes attended the meeting at Rewa in 1877: Nacirikaumoli and Nakausabaria, the twins from the Kauvadra mountains whose jagged range behind Rakiraki on the Ra coast figures prominently in Fijian creation myths. Crossing the Rewa river on their clubs, they entered the meeting-house, to the confusion of those within; the wall opened to give them entry and all fled before their coming - though indeed they were to be seen only by tamata dina, true men, their own sworn votaries.

Nacirikaumoli and Nakausabaria were, variously, the sons, grandsons or other relatives of Degei, creator-god of Fijians. He took the form of a snake. Coiled in a Kauvadra cave, he preserved in the minds of his votaries the persona of an aged chief - too old to exert himself with any pleasure, lying bleary-eyed and half-comatose beside his fire, but still with the embers of another fire glowing within him ready to blaze out if aroused. And the twins were like young chiefly aspirants to renown who had challenged this somnolent senior. As one version had it, they had shot Degei's pet bird Turukawa, then fled overseas. According to the story circulating through Ra in the late 1870s they had actually foresaken Fiji in disgust at the coming of Christianity. In their absence this interloper had annexed the twins' own persona; for they, Nacirikaumoli and Nakausabaria, were in truth the originals of Jehovah and Jesus.

12 Bosevakaturaga, 1878-80, passim.  
13 Wilkinson's report on visit to Ra and Ba, March 1878, FCSO paper of 1878; Eastgate's note for Thurston, n.d., FCSO 79/1577.  
14 See E. O'B. Heffernan's excellent ethnological notes, prepared for Gordon, now in Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology.  
15 Wilkinson's report, March 1878.
Now the twins had returned. Under cover of mist they had landed from a square-rigged vessel about September 1877. They had a new prophet: one Dugumoi, living at Draunivi village at the foot of Nakauvadra on the Ra coast, who had adopted the name Navosavakadua - 'he who speaks but once' (and is obeyed). He was descended from a line of bete, priests, who had been relegated to a twilight world by Christianity. In his teaching, the return of the twins presaged a Utopian age - the age of Tuka, eternal life.

Christian accretions were being grafted on to an indigenous pre-European belief in the possibility of achieving immortality by ritual means. The cult appealed especially to young men, and it had an aura of disrespect for authority. In the 1860s Navosavakadua's father had fallen foul of Wagalevu, then the senior chief at Rakiraki in Ra, and had later been killed at the instigation of Cakobau. As Thurston was to recall, grimly, it had been 'predicted at Bau, that something would certainly "happen" to this man, and very shortly afterwards he was clubbed'. Dugumoi himself was regarded as responsible for the acts of disobedience which had led Cakobau's government to sack the Ra town of Korowaiwai in 1872.16

It was in a similar context of disaffection that men of Ra province saw Nacirikaumoli and Nakausabaria enter the meeting-house at Rewa. Probably the twins' actual moment of entry was seen to follow hard on a remark by the chief Buli of the province, the Buli Rakiraki, Ratu Semi Davui, who complained: 'The people of Rakiraki are lazy. If no one stirs them up, they do not work'.17 Ratu Semi was an outsider in Rakiraki and Ra generally and his presence was resented. The Tuka votaries joined Rakiraki chiefs in an intrigue to recover the government of their land.

The Rakiraki chiefs were explicitly challenging the legitimacy of their provincial rulers.18 Ratu Semi, Buli Rakiraki, was brother of the Roko Tui Ra himself, the formidable Ratu Isikeli Tabakaucoro; and these brothers were

16 Ibid.; Thurston to C.O., 12 August 1891(Copy), FCSO 14/6625.
17 Bosevakaturaga, 1877.
18 For what follows see, except where otherwise indicated, the report and minutes of evidence taken January-February 1878: FCSO: Provincial Office and Armed Native Constabulary Correspondence; see also Gordon to C.O., 23 May 1878, CO83/16
strangers from Bau, the Rakiraki chiefs said, though they were actually from Bau's companion islet, Viwa, where Ratu Isikeli was hereditary ruling chief. He had nonetheless ruled in Ra for years with all the confidence that conquest, kinship ties and personal vigour could bring. He conceded that he owed his continued rule there to government appointment, but he was conscious that his formal installation as Roko Tui Ra, with the oath of obedience to the Governor, only put the colonial seal upon his long-established authority. He sneered at Roko Tui Macuata, weak Ratu Kinijaotì Katonivere, when Katonivere hinted that without help from a white garden-overseer he could not guarantee his young men would make their taxes. And yet Katonivere was of the soil of Macuata and the blood of its leading family; however distracted the province might be by tension between him and his cousins, Ritova's sons, Katonivere lived out his life in office without local attempts to depose him.

In contrast, Ratu Isikeli was a stranger in Ra, an obstacle to the Rakiraki chiefs' advancement. He affronted their dignity. As an old Turaga retold his charge to his juniors:

I said our land is being differently governed to any other land. These two children from Bau have come and ruled over us - Let us discuss the matter - Our land is our land - Let it be so and of the truth - I said I am old, it is with you youths to recover our rights.

Ratu Isikeli himself had probably been acceptable enough; the Rakiraki chiefs claimed local precedence but could not match the ruler of Viwa. On the other hand, they were contenders for subordinate offices in the Fijian Administration. Old chiefly functions were now being discharged by Buli and, to a lesser extent, by Magistrate. Lala was controlled by the Buli - no chief could order his house built, or require turtles from his own fishermen, without the Buli's consent. And with chiefly families at enmity, their representatives used government appointments as a weapon. To remove a rival from his post was one triumph; to acquire it oneself doubled the pleasure. Ratu Alivate Vutoni, son or nephew of Waqalevu, had been dismissed as Native Stipendiary Magistrate. Tavakece, a long-standing rival, had lost the office of Buli

Bosevakaturaga, 1876.
Rakiraki. Both posts went to the Roko's brother, Ratu Semi, who then found these two enemies joined against him. They mobilised the province with the cry that his precedence was an affront.

Thurston had always thought Ratu Semi a difficult subject. No more than the Roko himself could he stomach a white garden-overseer; but he was strongly for the ethic of the colonial age - perhaps excessively so in order to offset attack from the chiefs of the land who invoked the traditional decencies against him. His attitudes awakened a response among commoners, as well as among chiefs who did not aspire to office as strongly as the Rakiraki families.

The latter were hit materially, as well as in their pride. Their habit had been to rely on tributary villages for food, and now they found the Buli preventing their being supplied. 'I know that the land belongs to Peretania and that the root of Government is the Matanitu', acknowledged the chief, outspoken in old age; he showed a nice appreciation of introduced constitutional theory:

They govern the land and the people - The root of all appointments is the Govt we know all about that...

But Chiefs are Chiefs and people are chiefs property - And we wish to have possession again, according to Law if you like or Vaka Viti if you like...

Tavakece pitied the people's lot when chiefs were not treated as chiefs, so he assured the village meetings he addressed. While the people confessed later that they found life easier with the chiefs' lala curbed, and a commoner turaga ni koro of Rakiraki village itself stood up to the chiefs, all had followed Rakiraki against the Roko and Ratu Semi.

Even Tui Bua's protégé, Ratu Tevita Rasuraki, man of the younger generation and fervent lay preacher, had kept silent in the minor Ra Buliship which, Bua man though he was, he held by government appointment and in virtue of kinship ties in Ra. He was married to Tavakece's sister and did not want to offend him. Across the straits on Vanua Levu, Tui Bua

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20 Note on Eastgate to Thurston, 19 March 1877, FCSO 77/377.
himself applauded Tavakece's efforts to re-establish the honour and precedence of Ra families. 'We do not intend any evil but to recover the authority and government of our land', Tavakece explained. Vakaviti, there had nonetheless been talk of clubbing Ratu Isikeli and Ratu Semi. Instead, the political coinage of the new age had again been identified and charges of corruption had been laid against them with the object of getting an inquiry. And so there emerged in Ra province patterns of resentment and reaction which the coming twenty years were to see repeated across Fiji; though rarely again at a provincial level, because most provinces had as Roko Tui a man rooted in the local soil, with claims to paramountcy.  

This was the decent situation in Fijian eyes. When, by a shrewd stroke, the sympathetic Tui Bua was called on to reprimand Vutoni at the Bosevakaturaga, he knew how to express both fellow-feeling and resignation. 'Roko Tui Ra is placed in your Province, and Roko Tui Ba at Ba', he said, daring to speak aloud the fact that Ratu Vuki too was a stranger where he ruled; 'you say, you do not like others to be over you, still Fiji is at the present time governed by strangers from Britannia...'.

The white strangers were themselves deeply resented. Far inland in Viti Levu Nacirikaumoli and Nakausabaria continued to be invoked, even though they had not chosen to carry the Ra plot to success nor intervened to protect their prophet Navasovakadua from exile with the other plotters. At yaqona ceremonies in the hills when the Tuka gods were summoned, a special curse was devised for Fijians who laid these strangers' burdens upon their people: 'A prayer for those who hold Government appointments, that they may be punished at the day of judgement, whether they be magistrates or Bulis, may they [be] turned into pillars of salt.'

And when the gods at large, with some help from human agency, talked at night while men sat with yaqona-heightened senses on the mats, they were full of complaint about the lotu, foreigners, the government and taxes. As one such evening was described privately to Thurston, the young men listening had broken into laughter when the god started on

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22 Bosevakaturaga, 1878.
23 FCSO 91/2344.
taxes. On other occasions what youths said about taxes had been such that his informant would not put it on paper. The Ra plotter, Tavakece, had been speaking for more than his own province when he acknowledged: 'our true desire is to be left to ourselves...'.

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24 Heffernan's ethnological notes, CUMAE.

25 Heffernan to Thurston, 13 September 1878, FCSO 78/1748.
Chapter 5

'The bloody bones style'

'We are ruling the natives by and through the natives' - said Thurston - 'but the power we exercise in doing so is a moral power only.' Though he did not think any other necessary so long as government was left face to face with Fijians, the difficulty was that settlers were contending for the Fijian ear. 'Depend upon it, that settlers as a body are determined to break up the native policy if they can'; even if they did not succeed in influencing the Colonial Office, they could do worse harm in Fiji itself.¹

The dissident Rakiraki chiefs were frequenting the house of the Tavua planter Tom Burness, a dissatisfied land claimant much complained of at councils who was nonetheless thought to have influence with Fijians. Burness was trying to spread discontent at Ba. Thurston heard how he had called on Ratu Vuki with authority from G.A. Woods to use land Woods claimed in the province, or take twenty labourers instead. Fijians were slaves to government, Burness assured Ratu Vuki as he squatted to drain a cup of yaqona; they worked unpaid in the tax-gardens, were accorded none of the individual liberty that was their due as British subjects. Could not the Roko understand Fijians alone were taxed? When did he ever see Europeans working their land for government? Every Fijian he spoke with said he was better off before Cession. Burness lied, retorted Ratu Vuki, who had grown grey watching Europeans seek to direct his people for whites' advantage - 'then Fijians were as pigs or prisoners of war, when they could be flogged, knocked about, dragged away against their wills to work for white men and then cheated of their pay'.²

'But for the whites, many of whom are unwittingly sowing dragons' teeth, the natives would be a mere crowd of laughing, tractable children', Thurston told Gordon in March 1879,

¹Thurston to Gordon, 4 February 1879, Fiji, III, 517.
²Heffernan's memorandum encl. Gordon to C.O., 16 May 1879, C083/21.
tailoring his images to his correspondent. 'I vote for going straight at the enemy, so that he or they and all onlookers shall know what can and will be done to keep fools and dangerous people in order.'

He got back to Levuka that month from inland Viti Levu, via Bau, to discover he was a martyr to his own policy. Landing at Nasova pier he stumbled in the dark on the neurotic des Voeux, who was 'delighted to find it was Thurston, as I had been circumstantially killed several times by "disaffected natives"...'. The supposed victim was not much surprised. He had heard 'most awful stories' from whites when he arrived at Suva on the outward leg of his trip in the inter-island steamer, Black Swan:

'Rebellion was imminent.' 'The natives were arming in every direction.' 'Nine hundred men in Rewa had their faces blacked and were awaiting orders to begin.' Friend [Stipendiary Magistrate] was to be killed first. McEwen's people had taken all their arms and ammunition off to the hulk. Girdwood had just cast 100 bullets for his own use. Every man ranted in the 'raw head and bloody bones' style, and every one of them had had confidential yarns with chiefs, and knew their grievances and what was going to happen. I asked one man who 'knew all about it' what the natives were going to 'rise' for, and what they expected to get when they had risen? 'Well, he said, 'They won't stand it any longer, they're sick of it.' 'What have they got to complain of?' I asked. 'Oh, everything. They're jumped on by the Government, made to work without pay when they could get lots of work and fair pay for it too. This native-tax business won't do; it will burst up directly and there will be an awful row. However, I have got a good rifle and a revolver or two', etc. etc. This was the general burden of the song - no particulars, no anything. Mere rant with a strong dash of real funk. We had a lot of passengers, new men, and they asked me what I was going to do. Wasn't I going back to see the Governor and urge some measure of instant defence and precaution. When

3Thurston to Gordon, 30 March 1879, Fiji, III, 549-50.
4Idem. G.W. des Voeux was Administrator in Gordon's absence on leave.
I said No, that I was familiar with white man's twaddle, they were almost disposed to be rude.5

Near-panic had actually reigned at Nasova itself, he learned from Wilkinson who had calmed the novices; in Levuka 'the lies and excitement are wonderful', he related. 'I have been killed and eaten in half-a-dozen different ways, and people won't call on my wife for fear she will ask them about the news.'6

In reality, he had left the steamer at Deuba, then walked into Namosi to inspect his coffee nurseries. 'Everywhere quietness, hospitality, and a desire to do what was asked.' On he walked from town to town along the Waidina until March 26 found him back on the Rewa where he heard once more that revolt was imminent. Europeans - 'some fools and some scoundrels' - had been questioning Ratu Namusadroka:

'Tell me, Musadroka, when does this row begin?' 'Row, Acava? [what?]'

'Oh this vere [plot], to kill all the white men and defy the Government. We know all about it, you know, so you may as well tell me the time.' 'Isa, I know nothing about it.' 'But aren't you going to fight the Government, like the New Caledonian natives?' 'Acava era a cakava mai Niu Kalitonia?'

['What have they done in New Caledonia?']

The ass tells him, and adds: 'But you can't do that certainly, for the Government have disarmed you; all the guns have gone up to Nasova.' The chief: 'But if we want to kill a white man we can kill him without a gun. We can fire his house and cut him down with axe and club as he runs out. That was our way before you came.'

The ass now leaves, goes up the river, and announces that Na Musadroka has told him he doesn't care a d- for the Government; as for their guns, the Government can keep them; they will kill with club and axe, etc. etc.7

While Nasova - Government House - half-believed reports that Roko Tui Tailevu and Namusadroka's senior, Roko Tui Rewa, 5 Idem. 6 Idem. 7 Idem.
were both in arms, Thurston was with them marking out land for sugar-cane; they agreed to plant 400 acres for taxes and accepted - enthusiastically, he said - his proposal that their senior sons should join Ratu Lala at school in Sydney.

'This looks not like rebellion'. But at the prospect of a row between Government and native, numbers of people take no pains to conceal their delight. And I am certain, more so than ever, that unless the whites are deterred from mischief-making by the fear of heavy punishment, there will be trouble here ere long - not trouble on a large scale, but far larger than will be agreeable. Let me suppose a case, one that might happen any day. Let it be remembered that there are men in Fiji who would willingly die by rifle-shot or bayonet if they felt sure of their names going down to posterity with notoriety. Let it not be forgotten, also, that a well-known proverb hath it, 'a mate na cegu' (death is rest). When a barbaric people love notoriety, are prone to gain it at any cost, and are careless of death, they want delicate handling. Suppose some chief, urged by whites, says he will not pay any more taxes, or will not do something else that he ought to do, and is ready in the event of being dealt with for contumacy to show fight for it? What should be done? Hundreds of his people would go with him to their death because he was their chief. The veneer of Christianity would peel off, and their chief would again be their God. Hundreds of others would join him because he had done a bold though foolish thing. The supremacy of the law and of the Crown would have to be maintained. A few homesteads would be sacked, a few families destroyed or reduced in numbers, a few hundred natives would be killed off, and then we should report all quiet again.8

Or trouble might arise with a whole people - say, 'an insolent, bold people like the people of Kadavu'. They cared for no-one, chief or European - a state of affairs for which, with some prejudice, he partly blamed their former European Stipendiary Magistrate, Swanston. 'Their chief cannot control them; they do as they like', as his one-time plantation

8 Idem.
manager Eric Lomberg, living there as garden inspector, informed him. 'The flash men take any man's wife or daughter they can make an assignation with.' *Veit butakoci* [adulteries] and *Veit dauci* [fornication] are as much the order of the day as the morning and afternoon meal* - and the favourite trysting places were the village chapels.*9 The island was in constant touch with Rewa, its overlord at custom. Whites from Rewa were much in evidence there - like 'Misi Kerelevu' (Mr Beg-a-Lot), otherwise wizened little Gottlieb Storck. He had been there lately with a boxful of silver coins to jingle before potential recruits, to the disgust of Ratu Namusadroka who thought Fijians mad to be so easily seduced.10

If Fijians were to remain a people, if villages were not to be depopulated and the work of the land fall into disuse, every possible discouragement must be offered to recruitment. Its social results were self-evidently evil to Thurston, but he had to argue with his own colleagues. It was very hard to convince them half-empty towns represented 'any harm to the race...: they not only will not see it, but argue that it must improve and civilise the natives!' Experience had taught him otherwise; and he had the public support of the chiefs, his friend Tui Cakau prominent among them, in his resentment towards labour-recruiters.11

Few chiefs did not know the temptation put in their own way by labour-recruiters. Ratu Namusadroka would not always have resisted, nor Tui Cakau. Thurston had letters reporting bribes, sometimes accompanied by the money in question.12 He laughed over the naivety of a planter like William Fillingham Parr. Frankly saying that he was trying to put a Buli under retainer to supply him regularly with men, Parr made it plain he regarded labour used on village projects instead of on whites' plantations as wasted.13

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9 Idem.
10 Namusadroka's statement, 10 January 1879, FCSO 79/1015.
11 Thurston to Gordon, 7 January 1879, Fiji, III, 496; Bosevakaturaga, 1876 et alia.
13 Thurston to Carew, 5 November 1877, Carew Papers, HL: and Parr-Thurston-Carew correspondence at FCSO 77/1196, 1404, 1602.
Any Buli who impeded recruiters had Thurston's sympathy. He thought it particularly insidious when recruiters offered presents (called *yaqona*) to the relations of a potential recruit. This was a 'bribery and corruption scheme'. Legislation was needed to protect the harassed youth of the villages:

The notion of giving 'Yaqona' to friends and relations is simply nonsense. It is paying... a man's senior relatives to exercise their influence to compel such man to do something, whether he likes it or not. Their influence is all-powerful in people among whom the patriarchal power is anything but a dead letter. Thus, the 'qasis', or old men of a village, want knives, axes, and other things for clearing gardens, etc.; or there is going to be a marriage in the village, probably the Turaga ni Koro's daughter, and sulus are wanted. How easy to obtain them. The old men - I may say old people, for the women do not forget to act as a very fair chorus - tell A, B, C, and D: 'Look here, you go with this papalagi and work with him for twelve months, and then we can get these axes, knives, cloth, etc. Go on, Do you hate us that you won't obtain for us the things we want?' And by a thousand ways they plague, pester, and influence the man to take the 'Yaqona' and go. There can be little doubt that a young fellow's village would be very hot for him after refusing to do as he was asked by the old people. My own impression is, that no engagement should be ratified where it is discovered that merchandise or money has been given as 'Yaqona'. The native should be perfectly uninfluenced and unfettered by the order of things introduced by the European settler.14

He conceded that government should not encourage young Fijians in the indolent mood which the pace of village life indicated; but government had no right to force, or permit youths to be forced, away to work. It 'should teach them industry as far

14 Thurston to Gordon, 23 July 1878, *Fiji*, III, 369-70; and see Heffernan to Thurston, 13 June 1878, encl. Gordon to C.O., 22 June 1878, CO83/16.
as it possibly can - but it should teach it at home, not abroad'.

Of course some men engaged willingly, he was prepared to admit, but very few. Others went under pressure of personal misfortune - shame or jealousy provoked by their wives for example. Another category was made up of offenders against the regulations - the disobedient in the tax-gardens, or sex offenders - who made off to a plantation to escape punishment. This he was particularly against. No woman should be allowed to go without her husband, and no child under fourteen years. Again he had to argue his case with the charmed circle from England, and failed. As a result, recruiters were able - indeed, obliged - to pay twenty shillings for labourers they engaged, with another ten shillings a head to Ratu Luke of Nadroga or Ratu Vuki of Ba.

Freedom to pay *yaqona* did not help Parr. He was ruined anyway, by bad luck, bad management and lavish expenditure; but that made Thurston's life no easier. In his extremity Parr - ardent Conservative, public-school man, former solicitor of London and York - developed what must have been deep-seated paranoid tendencies. 'It is quite clear to me that he is mad - on the one point - that the Government and all its officers try to ruin him', Thurston summed him up:

He makes the most unfounded charges and tells most frightful lies of us all, but I think makes them in all sincerity. He is a most disagreeable person socially and otherwise and the idea of his championing native rights is highly absurd.

His idea of free labour is to bribe powerful chiefs to send men to work for him. It is true he readily pays the men, but equally so that he pays their hereditary masters to send them whether they like it or not.

Of parental and marital rights Mr Parr, by native accounts, takes little heed, but here again he is ready to pay for his amusements. Indeed I have

15 Thurston to des Voeux, 25 November 1878, FCSO 78/1748.
16 Idem.
17 See the letters of G.M. Henry in Supreme Court Papers, Bankruptcy Jurisdiction.
heard of him going about a village with samples of silk and showy print on his arm, visiting each house like a 'colporteur' with tracts and with his wares tempting the dusky damsels found within.18

Parr identified Thurston and Gordon as the principal authors of his misfortunes and plagued them both with vicious letters. Long before the end even Thurston, for whom laughter was always an anodyne, was to find his smiles growing more wry. In February 1879 he was chuckling over 'an interesting and amusing letter' (since lost) which Parr's Fijian labourers had sent to Mr Magistrate Friend, complaining about the way Parr's overseers beat them. A philologist would have enjoyed it, he thought: 'The "va koteme" [God-damn style] is enough to fix the nationality of the first European settlers in Fiji, if the Max Mullers of 3879 get hold of it.' The Agent-General for Immigration was going up to inquire. Meanwhile the labourers had

sent up the stick with which they are stirred, addressed 'Kivua na Qase mai Nasova' ['To the old man at Nasova'] which the bearer said meant me. Flattering! but verging on the truth. I have it in my office, and the clerks have humorously dubbed it the 'Great Amalgam', the name of the plantation whence it came.19

That plantation was an amalgam of woes for Parr and Fiji alike. It was here that the coffee-leaf disease which wrecked hopes of a new industry was introduced, in plants from Ceylon. And here Parr lost most of the money he had invested in Fiji since he arrived in mid-1876. He was not helped by his labourers, turbulent Kadavu men.20 His letters were his refuge. He wrote not only to the Australian press, which Thurston could influence against him by private contacts of his own, but also the Aborigines Protection Society, Members of Parliament, the Secretary of State and private correspondents. Some recipients recognised Parr as mad, others thought he was a knave; but M.P.s especially supposed there must be fire beneath his smoke. His theme was Fijian slavery under government oppression.

18 Thurston to Kew, 6 January 1883, Kew Letters.
19 Thurston to Gordon, 4 February 1879, Fiji, III, 519.
20 FCSO 79/307 and 1899.
'For pure unvarnished slavery Fiji defies competition', he assured R.G.W. Herbert (who plumped for insanity). 'Oh! it is cruel!!' he moaned of the tax-work. A head-tax in money should be substituted to reduce the commoner's servitude and the planter's penury. 'Every single working native in the group would...be delighted...as now his time and his property are "lala'd" by the Chiefs and he is reduced not only to absolute want but to a state of starvation...'

Parr was an hysteric as well as paranoid: government's in-justice to Fijians had 'raised a devil in me that will not be easily silenced'. And he was a white supremacist: he advocated constitutional reform, a Legislative Council of six nominated and twelve elected members, four of which total of eighteen 'should (or might) be natives'.

Philanthropy was the card to play when overt racism failed. Parr accordingly dwelt most upon philanthropy. He hit on Fijian suicides and, like the Fiji Times, assigned their cause to government and chiefly oppression, though as Thurston said:

In every case ever coming to my knowledge during thirteen and a half years' residence, the causes were jealousy or wounded pride - ninety cases out of one hundred would be jealousy...

He had to admit Parr was a nuisance - 'he works night and day, and spends a lot of money in postage'.

And Parr made much to Fijians of his efforts to free them, adding his frenetic voice and air of one with powerful friends to the general clamour from old hands. 'They say', wrote Thurston,

Why should the Government put all sorts of restrictions on your going to labour or leaving your island when you please? Why should the Government stop your buying grog? Why should you plant cotton when the whites don't do it? Why should the Government

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21 Parr to Herbert, 28 March 1878, CO83/18; and see minutes on Parr to Seed, 2 May 1882, encl. des Voeux to C.O., 3 May 1882, CO83/30.
22 Parr to Bramston, 12 August 1878, CO83/18.
23 Parr to Herbert, 15 April 1878, CO83/18.
24 Thurston to Gordon, 27 April 1879, Fiji, III, 501.
prevent a white man giving you credit? Why can't you buy boats (rotten) as you please? Why are you prevented leasing your land or selling it unless the Government intends taking it all?  

Some Fijians were listening, and Parr was becoming known as Na ka dina - 'the true one'. Nor did his friendship seem to be unwelcome to Ratu Cakobau's second son, Ratu Timoci Tavanavanua, whose place in the colonial order was a worry to Thurston.

He could well have had Ratu Timoci in mind when he spoke of the chief who might seek fame at the price of death. The free-spending young Bauan faced disgrace by the beginning of 1879. He and his younger brother Ratu Josefa Celua were 'becoming consummate rogues', said Thurston. Young men whose customary pursuits were now often closed to them, they had newer opportunities, requiring money. 'Tim is the greatest thief in Fiji; Wilkinson and myself are worried to death with them.' Ratu Joe, a leper, could be left to his own devices for he held no office; but Ratu Timoci was Roko Tui Lomaiviti, in deference to Bau's close ties with that province, and the Lomaiviti people were complaining that he robbed them to pay his Levuka creditors. His people were fed up with Ratu Timoci's working them hard for his personal profit, Thurston and Wilkinson reported after joint enquiry, 'when in former times he could only have done so through his Father or some other channel, that would have been a check, or appeal, against extortion'.

In the end Ratu Timoci was dismissed and rusticated for two years after a lecture from des Voeux on the responsibilities of rank which, Thurston thought, 'Tim felt for an hour perhaps'. 'He is really a very bad fellow, and has been ruined by the whites, Parr and others.' Ratu Timoci was not of the stuff which makes heroes and martyrs. He died in 1888, of natural causes, in the compound of Government House where Fijians in trouble came for help when Na Kena Vai

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26 Idem, 11 November 1878, ibid., 443.
27 Thurston and Wilkinson to des Voeux, 31 January 1879, FCSO unnumbered paper, 1879.
28 Thurston to Gordon, 4 February 1879, Fiji, III, 518.
was Governor. But in the late 70s, the white community seethed with rumour that his father Cakobau and friend Tui Cakau would resent Ratu Timoci's disgrace with the club.29

Thurston himself found Cakobau 'in a dreadful frame of mind... - not on Tim's account, whom he talked of hanging, but for fear that Lomai Viti should have other than a Bau Roko'.30 The installation of a foreign Roko there would have been a blow to both Bauan power and pride. The Vunivalu fretted. Rumour was that he had written to Tui Cakau for military support. This was better ignored or brought up lightly in casual conversation, Thurston felt; but 'that ass Parr' sent a messenger to ask Ratu Epeli at Bau whether his father and he were indeed planning rebellion. Parr alone was the Fijian's true friend, and could be told honestly, said the messenger, who was an imported labourer, and could not be expected to speak with decorum.31 Ratu Epeli felt white rumour-mongers were impertinent and said so.32

It remained an uncomfortable fact, though, that European settlers often had more meaningful personal relations with Fijians than the officials did. Despite the example set by Thurston, social apartheid existed. As the Chief Justice remarked, men like Ratu Timoci had no choice but to associate with the scamps on Beach Street, because no 'better class white' would give them unselfconscious friendship.33 Certainly a chief would not forget that Gordon was the Governor. Even Tui Cakau, who had been close to Thurston since he was a nobody in Fiji, would find his later importance intervening between them.

Thurston felt unbounded admiration and affection for Ratu Golea, Tui Cakau, Ra Turaga of the Fijians - 'the most physically handsome, active, and bold man of his race'.34

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29 Taylor to Wilkinson, 16 August 1879, Government House Miscellaneous Papers.
30 Thurston to Gordon, 29 March 1879, Fijí, III, 550.
31 Taylor to Wilkinson, 16 August 1879, Government House Miscellaneous Papers; Roko Tui Tailevu to Native Commissioner, 5 April 1879, FCSO 79/825.
32 Idem.
33 Gorrie to Gordon, 2 April 1879, BM Add MSS 49205.
34 Thurston to C.O., 17 February 1885, CO83/42.
In April 1879 when a fast canoe from Taveuni brought Ko mai KavuZa, matanivanua to the Tui Cakau, with the words Sa mate ko Ra Turaga - Ra Turaga is dead - he had cause to reflect that his own efforts to protect his friend by keeping him supplied with small quantities of the liquor he craved had been vain in the end. Ratu Golea had died of pleurisy contracted by lying drunk in the rain, after disposing of the better part of a case of gin extorted from a storekeeper trading for William Hennings.35

So died, in the prime of life, a man whose friendship Thurston had valued for fourteen years. His unusual standing with his own countrymen was shown in the sorrow expressed at the next Bosevakaturaga. By then Thurston had time to mourn with a Native Stipendiary Magistrate of Lau, Nacaniele Koroivuke, who had gone to war behind Tui Cakau in youth, and said: 'I prevent the tears from flowing, but in my heart I weep and mourn, and mine is the sympathy and remembrance of a commoner'.36 At the time of the matanivanua's arrival on Thurston's verandah, there had been need for action. The succession was in question, with the son Ratu Lala a youth, still at school in Sydney; the province might be disturbed by dissensions in the ruling family which had only slept under Ratu Golea's charismatic personality since they had broken out to kill his own father Tui Kilakila over twenty years before.

Urging des Voeux to attend the funeral in H.M.S. Cormorant, Thurston went too with the leading Bauans. 'The effect was magical - the murmerers shrank out of hearing.' With Ratu Cakobau, he walked behind the coffin as it went for burial in the yavu of the house where the father, Tui Kilakila, had been killed. And so, Thurston farewelled his friend, 'with all his faults - the boldest, proudest, and truest spoken chief in Fiji was hidden by the earth which, to use his exact words, "had drained" his father's blood'. For the moment, the province was put into the hands of a commission led by the Buli Cakaudrove, Ratu Kuila, who was one of the murderers and probably ached for the title now. As Thurston said, however, he was 'nearly dead'. And so while Thurston smoked his pipe ashore with the Somosomo people, and set spies to sound them out, he had in mind their probable

35 Thurston to Gordon, 27 April 1879, Fiji, III, 558; Thurston to C.O., 17 February 1885, C083/42.
36 Bosevakaturaga, 1879.
reaction to the installation of his foster-son as Tui Cakau
in defiance of his youth - though it was of general public
affairs that he wrote to Gordon:

At first many of them doubted the object of our
visit, but when they saw that the Lieutenant-
Governor had come, first, to direct who should
carry on the work, and second to show his regard
for the Roko of the province, they could not con-
ceil their feelings. One old man, a Buli, said
to me, 'We know now more than ever we did that
the Matanitu is a ka dina (true thing) it is
"noda Matanitu" (our government), You think with
us and of us, we know now that we are of one
people, though you are white and we are black'.

37 Thurston to Gordon, 27 April 1879, Fiji, III, 560.
Chapter 6

'They will cut one another's throats'

Thurston's psychology made it essential for him to hold such conversations - showing something of a Prospero in him, no doubt. They gave him strength when he sat writing to keep the Colonial Office behind the native policy. In crying 'slavery', local Europeans were in step with that well-reported champion of British institutions, Sir Charles Dilke, M.P. Dilke found the tax scheme akin to the censured culture system of the Dutch in Java.¹ He had to be repudiated, a task Thurston essayed in March 1878 with his favourite argument that Britons and Fijians were by no means the same people whom similar institutions would fit:

For a legislator to assume that one and the same sort of policy will suit all the various peoples of the earth seems to me as absurd as it would be for an artillery officer to assume that one particular shape and weight of shot would be suitable for guns of all calibre.²

The Fiji system was fundamentally different from the Dutch. The Dutch took produce at a fixed price and sold at the maximum, to government advantage; the Fiji Government sought the highest tenders and returned Fijians any money made above the assessment. All was organised in Fiji, 'not that the Government may obtain more, but that the native may pay less, and so have a large proportion of his produce to dispose of as he desires, and this he usually does for about half the amount of the contract price obtained by the Government'.³

Traders whose credit-backing would not stand this competition were scratching for a living. The bigger ones

¹The Times, 5 September 1877.
²Memorandum March 1878, encl. Gordon to C.O., 29 April 1878, CO83/16.
³Ibid.
found their profit-margin reduced, even if they rejoiced at the amount of produce going through their stores. In September 1878 Thurston heard the commercial community had decided on a show of strength:

The 'Chamber of Commerce' met in full force the other night in Drury's Office (9 x 12) for the purpose of discussing a plan to destroy the Native Tax scheme. There was, I hear, some very hard fighting and the particular member, who at present enjoys the contract, cut up very rough, and was sat upon accordingly. The idea seems to be to appoint agents in all the Provinces for the purpose of getting up 'awful cases of oppression', etc., and then to memorialise the Home Government. Meanwhile the season for tendering will come round again, and they will cut one another's throats over it. Nothing would be easier than to get up a simulated howl of discontent that would look splendid on paper. Every effort is made by traders to impress the natives with a feeling that they are being robbed; and that hitherto the attempt has failed is owing more to the confidence to the native in the Government than to any clear conviction of his own.4

The merchants meant business, though their motives were transparent. Narrowed down to a point, he told the Colonial Office,

the fact is that the Trader looks upon the Native as an ignorant being born to sell at the cheapest and buy at the dearest, to, or from him the Trader. The Planter regards the Native as a being specially adapted if not specially intended by Providence to work for him the Planter.5

When the Chamber of Commerce's petition reached him early in 1879 he found nothing in it to convince him otherwise, couched though it was in terms of pity for the poor commoner oppressed by tax-work and lala. Both sexes, all ages, had to work long hours to meet the assessment, said the merchants. In one area 450 people had spent three weeks collecting a ton of

4Thurston to Gordon, 15 September 1878, Fiji, III, 421.
5Memorandum March 1878, encl. Gordon to C.O., 29 April 1878, CO83/16.
candlenuts, worth £6. And the tabu - that 'excellent institution', to Thurston - was on the coconuts ten months of the year, for copra-making, with the result that nuts could not be used for drinking. The scheme 'offers no means whereby the Fijian can be raised in the social scale'; it had produced few of the promised improvements in agricultural method; it had 'proved most disastrous to the trade and commerce of the Colony, inasmuch as it has shut out all dealings with native producers through the usual and legitimate channels'; and it had removed the stimulus to individual labour. With all this, it had still not been the financial success predicted: over three years Fijians taxes had yielded only £38,426 of the £65,300 assessed, so that 110,000 Fijians had paid two shillings and sixpence each a year.6

Tyranny of the kind alleged by the Chamber was surely made of sterner stuff than would be satisfied by extracting half-a-crown a head, said Thurston. As always, the petitioners' object was to force Fijians to serve European interests whether they would or no; and they argued from the specious assumption that Fijian interests were equally served. They were inviting Fijians to travel hundreds of miles for wage-labour, and to sell produce at a loss of up to fifty per cent. As to their 'elevation' in the social scale, he doubted it would be achieved by 'the conversion of a noble race of natives into bands of migrating helots (for they would be little better) with no other interest in their work but the two-pence a day' paid by their white masters. And if the 'free and untrammelled course of commerce' so beneficially followed alike by Fijian and Europeans before 1876 were up for discussion, he could quote a letter from Ratu Vuki to throw light on it. Vuki wrote that Buli Ba had bought (but not yet received) a boat from Tom Hawkins for £3 in gold, 17 pigs and 30,000 yams. The pigs were worth £3 each, the yams at least £40, and the boat about £60. 'This is a very fair specimen' - Thurston commented - 'of the system of native trading and of the "commercial intercourse" it is sought to keep "untrammelled".'7

There were similar cases. 'Paul Joske, the irrepressible', he told Gordon privately.

6 Petition encl. des Voeux to C.O., 31 March 1879, C083/19.
7 Memorandum encl. des Voeux to C.O., 20 May 1879, C083/19; ibid., Thurston's note on Ratu Vuki to 'Na minisita Misi Cositeni', 12 May 1879.
has quietly sold the old *Emma* cutter to Roko Tui Namosi for 1900 logs of timber for sawing. The vessel is more than 20 years old, and was worth £800 when new. The logs are worth certainly 10/- each. The 'deal' will be stopped.\(^8\)

Thurston wanted the Native Debtors Ordinance strengthened; and he was unperturbed by the anger of the Levuka manager of the Bank of New Zealand at the *Emma*'s sale's being stopped - 'I am quite sure he was "in the swim", as Joske would say.' The bank manager he watched carefully, though, as a powerful anti-government man. 'He is always very friendly and agreeable to me personally, but rather fond of telling me directly and indirectly that he has been brought up in a "democratic colony".'\(^9\)

A democratic colony like New Zealand, with preponderant white representation in the Legislative Council was what Europeans wanted. Their petition was an opening shot. Though Thurston privately called it their 'lame and impotent conclusion',\(^10\) he demolished it in detail. Trade figures hardly supported the claim that Fijian effort was stultified and all trade kept out of private hands. Between May 1877 and April 1878 traders in Lau had bought 1,050 tons from Fijians; 424 tons had come in as taxes; white planters had sold a mere 300 tons.\(^11\) He satisfied the Colonial Office.

Next year he let an address by the storekeeper Henry Cave to the Chamber of Commerce pass unnoticed until he found it being reported by New Zealand newspapers. Cave had it from official figures that exports declined during 1879. In fact, Thurston returned, Levuka warehouses - clean-swept on 1 January - were overflowing on 31 December 1879 because Codeffroy's, the big Hamburg firm, had failed and their Fiji agent William Hennings could get no shipping. Exports had actually risen, in step with increased yield of Fijian taxes. Cave proved Fijian poverty by the fall in drapery imported; he was neglecting to say that decrease in this traditional Fijian purchase was offset by the increased value of ships' chandlery imported - a result mainly of Fijians buying boats with their tax-refunds.

\(^8\) Thurston to Gordon, 10 December 1878, *Fiji*, III, 466.
\(^9\) Idem, 3 March 1879, ibid., 538.
\(^10\) Idem, 30 March 1879, ibid., 551.
\(^11\) Hennings to Thurston, 18 April 1879, encl. des Voeux to C.O., 20 May 1879, CO83/19.
As for the continuing increased import in articles of European consumption Mr Cave should know that while the Fijians a short time ago confined their trading almost entirely to drapery and hardware they now purchase Bread - Tea - Coffee - Sugar - Soap - preserved meats and fish and oilmens stores generally.12

He found no poverty in the villages he visited while out in the *Barb* and *Zephyr* collecting taxes. If he compared what he saw now with the late 1860s, he found sophistication and increased comfort among Fijians.

Yet he could not deny that Fijians were grumbling about taxes. Complaints had been voiced at the same *Bosevakaturaga* where Nacirikaumoli and Nakausabaria selectively materialised. Thurston had gone over to listen and reply. There had been much playing with the subject before he arrived, the Bulis - on whom the main burden of the work fell - resisting the Rokos' demand that they speak out. *Masi* was mentioned with enthusiasm, as an article readily prepared; and cotton rather bitterly as having failed. The Rokos fumed, feeling that foolish difficulties were being made. The spectre of a money-tax was raised, and the inability of Tailevu province to produce the easily-made copra regretted. In Nadroga, the Roko had a tale of friction between him and his unwanted European garden inspector. Complaints about taxes left to rot for want of shipping came from other provinces. There were difficulties about the right to trade in tax-produce before the taxes had been paid. In Lau there was trouble between Ma'afu and his Fijian subordinates: 'the Tongans' manners are very different from ours, and domineering', Tui Lomaloma complained.13

In Thurston's presence the Rokos fell quieter. It was still clear enough the major trouble was that some provinces could not produce anything worth selling. Men were threatening to make off to white men's plantations, where at least their hours of work were fairly regular. If they had been available in great numbers, planters would have ceased to complain about their labour problems - or would have ceased to offer bribes; but certainly youths would go to gaol rather than work the tax-gardens while also fulfilling the other

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12 Thurston to Gordon, 30 September 1880, FCSO 80/1945.
13 *Bosevakaturaga*, 1877.
community obligations which fell most heavily on them. In the districts of Tailevu nearest to Bau during the first quarter of 1877 these obligations included: the presentation of first fruits to the Vunivalu; one hundred yams from each district for Ratu Epeli, the Roko, to take to the Bosevakaturaga; preparations for the vakamisioneri (Langham lamented that the Vunivalu could not be so generous as of old); a levy of five shillings on each man for the purchase of a provincial vessel; and the taxes.14

According to the division of the working week agreed upon by the Bosevakaturaga of 1876, people were to have three days to care for their own households; while for three they were to be at their chief's - or Buli's - disposal for house-construction, fishing, planting, canoe-building, caring for strangers, and at the disposal, too, of the garden-overseers for tax-work. It remained open to argument whether the limits of community obligations were not exceeded and whether people would occupy themselves usefully on their own three days or - as the Bosevakaturaga had it - would recline at ease. The certainty was the Leve ni vanua went on complaining; and it could not seriously be held that every complaint was the response to leading questions put by a European.

Every district could produce some crop for the market, Thurston had assured everybody. Yet some of the most readily available crops were more picturesque than merchantable. When he jeered that tyranny was easily satisfied if it stopped at demanding two shillings and sixpence, he was passing off the consideration that tyranny might be involved in the expenditure of the time and energy which went into raising that slender sum. Only the copra-producing provinces had assured income. Lau, the Yasawas, Taveuni and parts of Vanua Levu could readily make their taxes. There would also be a surplus from which a refund could be expected, and some copra would be left for sale to other traders. Forty tons of copra came easily to the contractor from the Yasawas in 1877, along with a ton of bêche-de-mer; and so the 553 able-bodied men of Yasawas had paid sixteen shillings and threepence each. The Roko Tui Ba and Yasawas, Ratu Vuki, had to be watched, nonetheless. For 1878's taxes he was requiring the five Yasawa Buliships to provide a thousand bags of copra each; this done, he intended the Ba people should go over to Yasawas to make their taxes from what remained of the Yasawa nuts.

14 Eastgate to Col. Sec., 2 April 1877, FCSO 77/441.
And then he wanted a further levy to buy a cutter for his own use.  

The resulting uneasiness among the Yasawa people had been dealt with by Thurston privately before the official report reached him; but the basic problem remained. Ba needed a profitable crop of its own, having no coconuts to speak of. So did inland Viti Levu, where maize and tobacco were the current standbys. And so, especially, did the major provinces of Tailevu and Rewa, which again were poor in coconuts and over-assessed. They struggled to raise the money with cotton, a little copra and some bêche-de-mer.

Until Parr's misfortune Thurston had proposed to meet the problem of the inland districts by introducing coffee. He planted nurseries in Colo during 1877 - 'and in addition to planting coffee and cinnamon (of which last I just imported a lot), want to do a little reafforesting upon the northern slopes and ranges, where fires have destroyed the primeval forest'.  

He flooded Fiji with new plantings. He had a request from Walter Carew on the Upper Rewa for 150,000 coffee trees in March 1878, and thought it proof that Fijians shared his own enthusiasm for a crop which would make their work more rewarding. The tabu was on the trees already planted in Namosi and consequently they were growing well. Regarded by the Colonial Office as 'an experiment', the tax-system must be proved a success by commercial results. 'Whenever I can gather coffee in Colo, I shall be easy, and consider the "experiment" concluded.'

Along with coffee for the hills went sugar for the coastal and river flats, and he had a resolution from the Bosevaka-turaga of 1878 to support him. He imported cane from Mauritius and Queensland so that Fijians could begin their planting with new stock. He had to look overseas for investors who might be induced to provide the crushing mills required - more efficient ones than the small affairs working fitfully on a few European plantations since before Cession. The problem was to attract capital without selling the country. He was at his wit's end about Rewa in particular. He was always worried about Rewa on general grounds:

15 Idem, 21 August 1878, FCSO 78/1316.
16 Thurston to Gordon, 19 August 1878, Fiji, III, 390.
17 Idem, 10 December 1878, ibid., 466.
What can be done? A bad Roko. All the lower chiefs drunken & corrupt; surrounded by whites who pander to their vices & who accelerate the demoralizing process now going on. Rewa bids fair to be the first district the natives of which will 'wane and disappear' under the 'influence and benefits of Civilization'.

He talked sugar with C.L. Sahl, Consul-General for the Kingdom in the old days, who was settling up with F. & W. Hennings. They stood his debtors to the tune of some £80,000. About to take over all their extensive land claims in settlement, Sahl proposed to go in for cane-planting if there were bigger mills. The Melbourne firm of Spence Brothers had a mill on the Rewa and was inclined to build more if government would give them favourable terms. Thurston was cynical. He intended to get their money and give few guarantees in return. 'For the last five months I have been much exercised with this affair', he wrote in March 1879:

Edwardes and Hoerder, Dr. Chalmers, and the New South Wales [Colonial] Sugar Refining Company have all been coquettting, but they all stand out for conditions - viz. Government to guarantee so many tons of [Fijian-grown] cane per annum; contract to last for five or ten years; Government to 'assist' in finding 'labour' for the mill; Government to find fuel! or to assist in finding fuel; the 'miller and his men' to be placed beyond the limits of native jurisdiction; no Roko or Buli to interfere with any men wanting to work at the mill, etc., etc.; and above all, Government to give a block of land as an 'inducement'!!

At last he brought negotiations to a conclusion satisfactory to himself:

...a glint of sunshine falls upon Rewa. After much negotiation, Spence Brothers of Melbourne are going to invest £20,000 or £25,000 in mill, punts, steam-launches, etc. The terms briefly are:- On condition of their investing as above, we sell them four or five hundred acres of land. They bind themselves to take all the [Fijian] cane we

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18 Minute on Friend to Col. Sec., 4 February 1879, FCSO 79/1889.
grow at the current rate, or at a price fixed annually, and to take it when required to do so, *i.e.* planters' cane must await the crushing of native cane. We bind ourselves to nothing. The only security they have is the good faith of the Government, and the certainty that Government is interested in the success of the scheme as much as the Company is. 19

Reflecting at leisure on their agreement, Spence Brothers may have felt the capitalists' deserts were too little appreciated in Fiji. They pulled out later in the year. Thurston was not worried, for he 'had an anchor laid out to Windward' in the shape of a Bristol company, Stanlake Lee & Co. 20 They took over Spence Brothers' agreement in November 1879. They could lease land from Fijians if the latter were willing, he told Stanlake Lee & Co., each application being dealt with on its merits. The government could not guarantee them any specific amount of Fijian grown cane in any given year. 'The interest of the Government is, however, so identical with your own that no guarantee is really necessary.' 21

That was his argument again to the Sydney sugar giant, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company, when he got away for a few weeks in New South Wales and Victoria at the beginning of 1880. A holiday was supposedly his purpose, relief from a temperature of 85° and the perfume of trumpet flowers, even escape to something like the breath of North Sea air he sometimes dreamed of. Blue Mountain air was at any rate fresher than Fiji's, and he had a few days up there with Marie as guest of Sir Henry Parkes, perennial wild man of New South Wales politics, botanising among the ferns alongside that self-aggrandising but engaging fellow. Thurston sent back a turtle with his bread-and-butter letter, and the mock apology that in Fiji 'the old national dish - cold missionary - is getting out of remembrance...'. 22

He dined a couple of times at Government House, where he was embarrassed by the confidences of Lord Augustus Loftus on

19 Letters to Gordon in Fiji, III: and especially 3 March 1879, ibid., 537.
20 Thurston to Horne, 16 November 1879, Kew Letters; and correspondence at FCSO 82/2397.
21 Thurston to Stanlake Lee & Co., 1 November 1879, FCSO 82/2397
22 Thurston to Parkes, 16 July 1881, Parkes Correspondence.
the political scene - 'the remarks of a not (as I am rude enough to think) very wise, though very amiable, old gentle-
man'. He listened gravely at the same table while the globe-
trotting, curio-collecting English gentleman James Edge-
Partington told him how effete it was to hold Fiji was
annexed for Fijians' benefit, not the white settlers'. Edge-
Partington had a friend there, Lieutenant Chippendall of
Wainunu. When they dined the second time, Thurston may not
have much minded telling him that 'Chip' was up on a charge
of manslaughter over the death of one of his New Hebrides
labourers.23

Not merely hysterics like Parr, or good farmers with a
taste for politics like Burness, needed watching, but also
a former naval officer with a father in Anglican Orders like
Chippendall. His case was instructive about attitudes at
home, too. The sense which automatically prevailed in Fiji's
white community that 'Chip' was being victimised had its
counterpart in the House of Commons, fanned by a pamphlet
produced by his father. The reverend gentleman went to John
Bright, and to Parliament, in the interests, as he saw it, of
countless other blameless young men like his son - the father
did not know how 'Chip' used Fijian women - who might be
accused on the word of New Hebrides' cannibals as they
struggled with the difficulties of colonial life. How far
men among Thurston's own Colonial Office masters thought the
same appeared next year. The son of a certain Colonel Akers
lost his temper with a Fijian who had got his overseer pun-
ished for a breach of labour regulations, and gave him a
thrashing. This won Akers junior a month's gaol sentence -
'a sufficiently severe punishment to inflict on a white in
the presence of a native population', according to one of
Downing Street's dear old ladies; and, fleeing the country,
young Akers had presumably lost £2,000 his father had in-
vested in the estate.24

When, giving up the pretence of an Australian holiday,
Thurston approached CSR, his calculation was that a few

23 James Edge-Partington, Random Rot (For private circulation
only, Altrincham, 1883), 3 and 10 May 1880.
24 A Plea for Enquiry Into The Conduct of Sir Arthur Gordon...
In the Case of Lieut. E.C. Chippendall, R.N.... (Manchester,
1880); Rev. J. Chippendall to C.O., 10 August 1880, C083/24;
to Bright, n.d., C083/24; Minute on Times cutting, 10 August
1883, C0234/43.
giants would be easier to control than many such pigmies. The few might remain satisfied with a responsible Governor, the many would certainly want responsible government. He had no illusions about CSR, all the same: they were 'the most selfish Company in the Australasias', he found. 'It would be a good thing if they invested, but not if they got all they want.' The fiscal benefit of their mills to the colony would be immense, and their direct benefit to Fijians, the prime reason for introducing them, not less so. 'If they will drop coquetting with the matter and go in properly, the revenue in three years will reach six places of figures.' Milled on the scale they could mill it, sugar might change the actual revenue for 1879 to £47,600 into £100,000 for 1882 - sugar, and the increase in island commerce passing through Fiji which he was also trying to promote by negotiating for a steamer to run between Levuka and Nuku'alofa. 'If we can get this company, wealthy and experienced as it is, to invest in Fiji, it will effect wonders in the place', he wrote. 'I shall do all I can to induce them to embark their money without making any sacrifices.'

They wanted sacrifices, of course. And they threatened to accompany Spence Brothers to Queensland, or the Northern Territory, if they were not sold 2,000 acres for £2,000 in consideration of the £15,000 to £20,000 which they had it in mind to invest in mills in Fiji. He was empowered by Gordon to sell only 1,000 acres - though he would have liked to let them have another 500, for the sake of revenue generally and the Native Taxation Scheme in particular. He bargained the price up to £2 an acre, and secured an understanding that they should actually invest £50,000. Returning to Levuka in May 1880, he went on to Rewa with their representatives to agree what land they should buy - illegally buy, in strict law. He had aroused in them expectations of his friendship and support which were never forthcoming over his remaining seventeen years. And, with the injection of money for leases, he had intensified solvents at work in Fijian society. Flat land on the Rewa became a desirable commodity. It was worth Ratu Mariki Toroca's incurring the enmity of Ratu Epeli Nailatikau by competing for the right to lease it.

25 Thurston to Gordon, 16 March 1880, Fiji, IV, 251.
26 Idem, ibid., 271-2.
27 FCSO 80/1326; Thurston to Gordon, 20 May 1880, Government House Miscellaneous Papers.
At the time, Thurston felt he had pulled off a coup. Fijians were to be enabled to grow sugar for the market on their own land, assured of a worthwhile return for their labours and in their independence of the white planter. If the latter was also to grow sugar, though, he must be provided with labourers, and since a Fijian long away from his village represented a blot on the policy, those labourers must come from outside Fiji. Melanesia continued to be a source of supply. New Hebrideans and Solomon Islanders crowded the small brigantines and schooners that came into Levuka harbour after their thirty day beat up to Fiji against the trades. But the labour traffic took its toll in lives, while opinion was that Melanesia sources would soon be exhausted. And Fiji must compete there against the higher wages and greater social attractions of Queensland.

The logical upshot was already on the horizon. From his verandah late on 14 May 1879 Thurston saw the full-rigged ship Leonidas from Calcutta in difficulties while searching for the passage. The pilot being slow to appear, he took Cakobau's yacht out to bring her in. She carried the first batch of those Indian labourers whose presence in Fiji was, from the first, to give so much concern to Fijians - and for whose physical appearance Cakobau himself was said to have expressed contempt. Thurston thought they look well enough, these undoubted helots of the Empire, as they awaited the attention of, as yet, reluctant employers:

The men are a very fine set of fellows - in physique equal, if not superior, to the best lot of Polynesian labourers I have ever seen. The women seemed a good full-bodied lot of wenches, and the children are a jolly lot of little things. One child has been born at Yanuca, and has been named 'Fiji Ramsami' or something of that sort.28

28 Thurston to Gordon, 10 August 1879, Fiji, IV, 12.
Chapter 7

'In a state of slow transition'

Gordon left Fiji in mid-1880 to govern an unappreciative New Zealand. When Sir G.W. des Voeux came petulantly back to Nasova - a weak man, subject to fits of hysteria and pettish anger - Na Kena Vai built his new house as far from Government House as he decently could, and organised the capital's transfer to Suva. He pressured merchants like the storekeeper Henry Cave who were reluctant to move. He ran into Cave before Cave knew his tender for trade-goods to pay returning Melanesian labourers had been accepted, and gravely told him that government, undecided, would probably be influenced if one of the competitors were in business at Suva rather than Levuka:

What do you say, Mr Cave? 'If I get the contract', said Cave' I'll put a house up at once.' So an hour afterwards I told him he might get out the plans and specifications for his new store at the Capital and I am afraid, though provoked by very opposite causes, there was a grim smile on both faces.

Cave's smile faded when the goods he supplied - the concertinas and umbrellas, axes, clothes, prints and muskets - were found to be damaged and he was threatened with loss of his contract.1

And tormentor J.B.T. maintained the Native Policy, certain that Fijian communities must rule, their young men lose the licence to roam they still possessed under existing labour laws. His new ordinance, No.11 of 1883, forbade any man to recruit except in certain 'home districts and adjacencies' to his own place; after all, to take a Vitu Levu man to Taveuni or Lau was like taking him from Trinidad to Martinique, and the opportunities for vagabondage, followed by dislocation of parent communities, were many. 'Our policy I admit is one of retardation in many respects', Thurston told Gordon; 'but

1Thurston to Gordon, 23 December 1880, BM Add MSS 49204; FCSO 81/1195. 86
it is life. To the semisavage, progress — i.e. the progress understood by the livers of so-called civilization — is death. Plague, pestilence, and famine are not more certain destroyers.² He politely endured indignation from visiting investors from Australia who, looking over Fijian regulations and ordinances, assured him that the Fijian 'is a slave Sir!' And he could afford to mock the visiting New Zealand politician J.C. Richmond (whose family had interests in the sugar millers Stanlake Lee & Co.) when this solemn Pakeha, learning that Fijians could lease but not sell their land, 'thought it looked something like bondage not to let natives part with their land as they liked, and that they could do things better in New Zealand'.³

Yet, while he protected Fijian society, he had not learned how to check its decrease. Infant mortality was the cause, he assured the Bosevakaturaga, a more palatable explanation to him than the explanation which the previous year's meeting heard from one of themselves:

it is alone owing to the British Government. That is it. You will enquire in vain for any other cause. The Europeans have come, and we are decreasing. In times past when a child was born, there was the smell of the native land, and he lived; but now the smell of a foreign land has entered us, and it is unsuitable — the smell of foreign importations.⁴

Predictably enough, when Jonacani Dabea thought instead that the cause was the abolition of the custom whereby a man did not sleep with his wife for a period after childbirth, Ratu Vuki launched into one of his regular diatribes against missionaries for their wholesale proscription of customs like this as vakatevoro.

And yet the view of government as alien, even hostile, had currency among Fijians despite government's attempts to act vakaviti. Was not the Fijian way being preserved at too high a price — asked Jonacani privately — when it meant the importation of Indians? 'We would rather that all our people, ²Idem, 24 January 1881, BM Add MSS 49204.
³Idem, 20 June 1881, ibid., idem, 12 August 1883 (copy 1, encl. Gordon to Selbourne BM Add MSS49218).
⁴'Bosevakaturaga, 1883, 1884.'
or as many as could be spared should go to work', he said
'than that so many Indians should come to our land.' 'If
there is any fear arising in the Native mind', returned
Thurston, 'that Indians are brought here to supplant them -
i.e. "eat up the land" early efforts shd be made to remove
so dangerous and wrong [an] impression.'

The Indians were purely functional; they were introduced 'to secure a working
population and nothing more'.

Close personal knowledge of Fijians was required for
peace in the Colony, Thurston held: the Native Commissioner
should be accessible, in attendance at provincial councils
to test opinion, and the Colonial Secretary, under the
Governor, watchful overall. 'We had a scene at Draiba the
other day', he related by way of illustration, in January
1881. 'The Lovoni and Totoga flash men defiled the Vuni
Valus house just before he landed from Lau. They said the
day of the Chiefs was over &c &c.' Cakobau's Bauans were
delighted to dispute this: 'they prepared to club the Lovoni
and Totoga people in Draiba and burn their town down...'
They had to be dissuaded by Ratu Ilaitia Toroca and Cakobau
himself:

We were on the verge of a very awkward bit of
butchery. The prompt flogging of the offenders
and their removal was a just and sensible pro-
ceeding, urgently necessary, & operating as a
sedative to the offenders and offended alike.

He never had cause to forget he was administering a volatile
people who valued their warlike past, who had never wanted
British rule and who suffered it only so long as its mores
infringed no fundamental one of their own. 'Fijian society
at the present moment is in a state of slow transition or
combustion', he told the Colonial Office, with a certain im-
patience, 'and so it will continue for many years.' Not
long before, life had been warfare and intrigue. 'To the
common people the chiefs were Gods. In the eyes of the
chiefs the people were mere slaves, taught to work or fight
as required.' Warfare now was over, but love of intrigue
remained.

5 Jonacani quoted by Blyth, 18 July 1884, FCSO Bundle 1884:
answers to printed circular 3 July on Fijian labourers;
Thurston's comment, ibid.

6 Minute 18 December 1893, FCSO 92/1380.

7 Thurston to Gordon, 24 January 1881, BM Add MSS 49204.
...doubtless many hundreds of lusty young Fijians regard peace as an enervating and unbecoming state of existence for a man. Their fathers died with a reputation. They killed or were killed. If a young Fijian of today expresses himself strongly... he is almost sure to be sarcastically asked by some old woman, why he speaks; what has he ever done? and will probably be insultingly told that his father was a man; or if his father was killed by an enemy, he will be asked derisively whether that enemy still lives?

Social tension accompanied material progress. Emulation between communities might result from the purchase of a cutter, for example, or dissatisfaction might stir within a community if, the tax refund proving insufficient, a levy had to be made for the purchase.

In the past men irritated with their chief had turned to another; now they were expressing dissatisfaction by changing their religion. They could do it with greater comfort, too, as they need not now move from their village when, under protection of law, they turned from lotu dina to lotu katolika. Since the Fijian élite were mostly Wesleyan, this was what the discontented usually did. It made difficulties for an administration committed at once to liberty of conscience and social solidarity. Gentle old Père Bréheret was a frequent suitor to Thurston; he was assured of wine and a private chuckle over Wesleyan bigotry but got little sympathy when he complained about inter-church relations. Freedom of Catholic conscience meant freedom to penetrate Wesleyan preserves, in Thurston's experience. He wanted Fijians left alone, thinking Catholics should be free to help Wesleyans build their chapels and vice versa without interference. This co-operation was against the will of God, Bréheret told him. In all places and at all times, confirmed Bréheret's hot-headed subordinate, Père Deniau, theology had rejected every such compromise. And Thurston was no more impressed when an old friend claimed to be interpreter of divine will than he was when Langham did it:

the difficulty lies in the conflict of ideas and feelings held by European Priest and Fijian Chief

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8 Thurston to C.O., 31 December 1883, C083/34.
9 Minute at FCSO 79/1486.
10 Minute on Blythe to Col.Sec., 4 August 1879, FCSO 79/1356.
respectively. The latter is the head of a Commune and according to his ideas and the custom of his people regards house building & garden making (no matter who for) as communal work. The Priests declaring 'la volonté de Dieu dont ils sont les envoyés' forbid under penalty of damnation this communal work - set native against native, divide a town or district against itself, and bring the patriarchal authority of the Chief into contempt.

As far as I am aware the native does not trouble himself or his conscience in the slightest degree. He assists to build, or works, at his chiefs bidding without thinking or caring to what object the building will be put, or what results the work will effect - and constituted as Fijian native society is I am bound to say that this tendency of Catholic Priest to engender feelings of hatred, & to excite disobedience, in the members of a Qali is dangerous to the welfare of the Colony.

The question is - Is building a house or making a garden for some person professing and teaching an opposite religion an interference with liberty of Conscience? I don't think so - It would be just as reasonable for a Roman Catholic seaman on board a man of war to decline spreading an awning under which to hold Divine service, or to refuse to sling the Chaplains Cot because he was a Protestant. 'Théologie dans tous les temps et dans tous les lieux' has we know worked strange wonders & so has a ropes end and a hairy boatswains mate.11

House-building, garden-planting, were veika vakavanua, matters pertaining to the life of people and land. In order that this life should continue, in the present perplexing age when men were not sure whether written law drove out custom, the Native Regulations Board had produced No. VI of 1881 - 'Respecting vakavanua matters'. This enabled the qase to continue their oversight of the work, the life, of the land. Marriages might be regulated, land apportioned and the time devoted to, and the extent of, planting decreed; and sanctions could be imposed where breach of the custom involved was no offence before district or provincial court. Even so, a

11Minute 23 June 1881, FCSO 81/1835.
member of the Fijian Administration, a hereditary chief and Roko of his province, looked seaward from the meeting house of the Bosevakaturaga and lamented: just as he could see no waqa ni Viti lying among the cutters anchored offshore, so it was with all Fijian ways. Chief-like customs, customs of the land, were passing away and being replaced with bastard European habits. 'We resemble a speared fish - we can do nothing - the spear has gone in too deep.' Ratu Erone Loganimoce, the Tui Nayau in succession to Ratu Tevita Uluilakeba, was speaking for more than his caste.\textsuperscript{12}

Some members of the older, powerful generation were dying in fact. Ratu Isikeli Tabakau coro had followed Ratu Golea to the grave, mourned for his ability to guide a meeting.\textsuperscript{13} At the funeral Cakobau himself was seen to walk with difficulty. Unexpectedly, in 1881, it was Ma'afu who went next. His son Siale brought news of Ma'afu's sickness to Levuka - along with a cargo of what Thurston suspected was stolen copra. Gangrene had entered an injured leg and Ma'afu died soon after a doctor arrived. For all his personal reservations, for all his desire to see the Tongan community in Fiji reduced, Thurston could not but think Ma'afu's loss untimely. He told Gordon:

All our old men are going before we can train others to take their places. This misfortune and the want of more good and competent officers of our own race among the natives is the weak link or links in the strong cable of our Native policy -

As you know I was never particularly fond - politically speaking of Ma'afu I believe he was a very dangerous man - one who had missed his 'coup' and yet had come out better than he had any right to expect.

I believe also...that he authorised - or shut his eyes to great oppression by Tongans in Lau - in fact the Fijian soul in Lau is now lifted up & asserting itself by talk as to the propriety of driving all the Tongans out of the country - This is of course mere ebullition of temper & will come to nothing.

\textsuperscript{12} Bosevakaturaga, 1884.

\textsuperscript{13} Idem, 1880.
Still for all this - & for the sake of Tongan affairs I would gladly have seen Ma'afu holding his place for another ten years. I am very sorry also that the poor fellow should have come - after an active and chief-like career - to such a melancholy end - 14

By 'Tongan affairs' he meant the succession to the aged George Tupou I. Ma'afu might have hoped to follow him onto Tonga's throne. But the next year when Thurston visited Tonga on High Commission business, he found His Tongan Majesty comparatively vigorous, and with sound views about dead Ma'afu's Tongan followers in Fiji. 'HM informed me that they were nearly all bad fellows - a statement I fully believe.'15 The better to keep them under his own eye, Tupou fetched home to Tonga all except those with permanent ties in Fiji. It was curious to reflect that Tupou had played as a child in the hold of William Mariner's privateer, Port au Prince.

Ratu Cakobau lived on, drawing his £1,500 a year pension, reading his bible, making his peace with past and future, while Thurston sought to reconcile his children. Ratu Epeli and Adi Arieta Kuila came to lunch on alternate days, while Na Kena Vai tried successfully, he thought, to bring together these longstanding enemies.16 He preserved an affection for Adi Arieta that lingered long after her sudden death in 1887. She was a vigorous woman, the effective ruler of Naitasiri after her husband, the Qaranivalu of Naitasiri, died in 1871. She was a valuable informant. Thurston sat at her feet while, for instance, she talked of the distaste felt by Fijian women for monogamy, and for the sexual advances inevitably made by the husband while the wife was unclean from childbirth. 'Polygamy was to their minds a natural state', he wrote; 'monogamy was unnatural and is so still.'17

As steward for Cakobau and those of his children who relied on him for support, Thurston was seeking to assure Adi Arieta's future by leasing Naitasiri land to the C.S.R. Co.

14 Thurston to Gordon, 18 February 1881, BM Add MSS 49204.
15 Minute 26 May 1881, FCSO 81/908.
16 Thurston to Gordon, 30 April 1881, BM Add MSS 49204.
17 Thurston to C.O., 21 October 1886, GBPP 1887 Vol. 58 [C.5039].
in her name. Not all of the thousand acres promised for sale to the company had been made available; and now, under the Native Lands Ordinance of 1880, Fijian land was absolutely inalienable. Twenty-one year leases were all that government would allow. At seven-and-sixpence an acre for the first ten years and fifteen shillings from then onward, Thurston felt these leases were fair to Fijians, and like Gordon he considered the flats at Navuso could properly be used to support the chiefly family, Adi Arieta and her three sons. In December 1882 he wrote privately to Walter Carew, Stipendiary Magistrate and Commissioner for Colo East: let the provincial council give its sanction to this lease in her name, and let Carew himself make haste to register Fijian land titles so that actual boundaries could be identified and disputes avoided.

Then if the old Vuni Valu drops off the hook Madam Arieta will not miss the assistance she now derives from him, and the promise of Sir Arthur Gordon will have been kept - I shall be beyond danger of re- proach, and justice & expediency will alike be satisfied.18

With responsibility for Cakobau's pension entrusted to him, Thurston would not let it end up in the pockets of Levuka businessmen. Boat-builders thought to do especially well. How was it the Victoria still lay on W.H. Bruce's Levuka slip - Thurston asked Ratu Timoci Tavanavaua - when he, Cakobau's friend and adviser, had three times asked the Vunivalu to have the yacht brought to Suva where work could be superintended? Let Ratu Timoci approach his father. 'It is true what he says I am his true friend and that our friendship did not commence yesterday', reiterated Thurston - yet here was Cakobau listening to derelicts who would squander his money. Bruce's bills would mount; probably the yacht would not be decently refitted; and already, in addition, Cakobau was committing himself to spending £300 on the chapel at Bau. 'There are other matters which I have heard', Thurston asked Ratu Timoci to inform his father:

you know my disposition, that I would not undertake to fulfill a trust that was not clear to me, therefore, advice given by me to the Vunivalu must be

18FCSO 87/1270, encl. in 87/1755; Thurston to Carew, 16 November and 3 December 1882, Carew Papers.
adopted, as the Governor has already said, if not I shall cease to counsel him or his Children, & cannot counsel him while strangers are doing so...19

As Thurston explained when Bruce complained, he had announced in the Fiji Times that no bill would be paid that was not for work Thurston had authorised - 'for the King was being robbed right and left by people who allowed his sons Timoci and Joseph to play into their hands'. Bruce was abetted by Woods (whom, on his return, bankrupt, from Samoa, Thurston had helped into the job of President of the Levuka Marine Board). Together Bruce and Woods got Cakobau to Woods's house '& advised him to resist my advice & influence - telling him that he was not a child but a big Chief & if the Queen wanted any of his money to throw the whole thing up.' Ratu Cakobau replied 'True, true' - then sent his chaplain to tell Thurston what had passed.20 He remained 'the Vunivalu's autocratic dictator' to Bruce, who was left unpaid.21

Cakobau 'dropped off the hook' at the beginning of February 1883. 'He sent for me on the night of the 27 telling me he feared he was dying'.22 What passed between them Thurston never recorded, but the old man's state of mind was recalled by Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi, son of Ratu Mara Kapaiwai whom Ratu Cakobau, his classificatory brother, had hanged in 1859 when Ratu Jone was ten days old. The father had been a rival to the Vunivalu; the son might be one to the Vunivalu's children. Ratu Jone should seek no revenge, said Ratu Cakobau; he regretted Ratu Mara's execution and blamed tale-bearers about Bau who had set them at enmity. Let Ratu Jone live in peace with Cakobau's eldest son Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, taking care to talk with him in the evening so that dissension should not be aroused between them. As for the inheritance, Ratu Epeli should have the position of Vunivalu of Bau; but he could never be installed, for Ratu Cakobau had given the actual title to the Queen of Fiji and of Britain. When Ratu Epeli died Ratu Jone should succeed, for Ratu Timoci Tavanavanua - said his father - was a frivolous

19 Thurston to Ratu Timoci Tavanavanua, 2 December 1882, FCSO 87/3509.
20 Ibid., Minute 27 March 1888.
21 Bruce to Mitchell, 28 November 1887, FCSO 87/3509.
22 Thurston to Kew, 12 February 1883, Kew Letters; and to Emily Burrows, 6 February 1883, Burrows Papers.
man who thought only of his stomach, while Ratu Josefa Celua's leprosy was advanced.23

Most of these dying directives, as Ratu Jone recalled them, were reflected in Thurston's relations with the family hereafter. Within two months of Cakobau's death Ratu Jone, at Thurston's instigation, was confirmed as clerk in the Audit Office at £50 a year.24 It was the first step in a career in the Fijian Administration not much less distinguished, for its times, than that of his own son, Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, twentieth century Fijian leader whose view of his own society echoed Na Kena Vai's. As for Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, he never was installed to the title Vunivalu of Bau.

Cakobau's sons went on piling up debts. Ratu Epeli had to find £1,100 for an Auckland-built schooner, the Black Prince, whose building cost had originally been set at £700; and when he sold her for a pittance in 1887, Bruce was claiming another £316 as buying-agent.25 Thurston was less obsessive in overseeing the sons' affairs than of the father's; he was nonetheless reckoned to be intolerant of the Cakobau family, but indulgent towards Ratu Lala.

His adopted son was thought especially favoured. 'It is a good thing to have a father', ran one comment at the Bosevakaturaga.26 When Ratu Vuki told the 1880 meeting that it was 'evil for the government of the land to be in the hands of a youth', he was hitting at the youthful ruler of Cakaudrove. Ratu Lala had just been put in his father's place through his foster-father's influence at Nasova. Thurston had clothed, fed and schooled the boy. He would not give up his interest in the young man, let anyone cry 'favouritism' who wished. He had known that Ratu Lala's position would be difficult when he went back to Cakaudrove. Lala returned with unexceptionable English manners and tastes to a land where his father had ruled by a very different

23 Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi to Governor, 26 August 1913, FCSO 14/1745.
24 FCSO 83/1525.
25 Bruce's petition, 30 November 1887, FCSO 87/3655 encl. in 88/271.
26 According to Blythe - see his memo. of 25 February 1886, FCSO 86/434.
personality. Gordon's reservation was that Lala put too much scent on his handkerchief.\textsuperscript{27}

'He will get "Fijianized" again', Thurston reassured Gordon. 'My fear is, lest he get too much so.'\textsuperscript{28} He was in an uneasy relationship with two cultures. While he might offend the qase in Natawa bay by sending for their youths to build houses for him at Somosomo by letter in the European fashion, not by word of the accredited matanivanua as etiquette dictated,\textsuperscript{29} he was not acceptable to the European community. He offended MacGregor, for instance, with his good English, high rank, and powerful protector.\textsuperscript{30} Only in Thurston's house was he welcome, among officials. And the adoptive-father-son relationship, the claims of the mentor, may have made difficulties. They certainly arose when Ratu Lala turned for companionship to whites among whom he could be more at ease. As with Ratu Timoci, these were usually, necessarily, the 'low scamps' of the beach, or merchants who played bear-leader to dip their fingers in the bear's honey-pot. He was to have called on Gordon in Wellington when he visited New Zealand in 1881, but got no further than Auckland where he was seen with a Fiji commission-agent and ordered a yacht. This 'falling into the toils of the fowler so readily vexes me very much', Thurston admitted.

His notions are I fear becoming very extravagant and unless he is checked will land him in debt. For the first time I had something approaching a momentary unpleasantness before he left - as I insisted upon his paying his bills before doing so - and would not let him take so much money away as he desired. However, when he found I was firm he behaved pleasantly and properly. It is too much to suppose he can do without some restraining influences - and on the whole he is no worse - perhaps better - than a young fellow of any race brimful of health and spirits placed at an early age in a position of authority.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{27} Thurston to Gordon, 16 March 1880, Fiji, IV, 252; Gordon to Lady Gordon, 1 March 1880, ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Thurston to Gordon, 16 March 1880, ibid., 253.
\textsuperscript{29} Blythe to Col. Sec., 23 September 1881, FCSO 81/1913.
\textsuperscript{30} MacGregor's minute 8 December 1887, FCSO 87/3438.
\textsuperscript{31} Thurston to Gordon, 21 March 1881, BM Add MSS 49204.
Actually, he gave Ratu Lala much rein. Lala had to pay those of his father's debts that his foster-father did not insist on his repudiating; they amounted to £1,200. Thurston arranged a loan from the Bank of New Zealand. It was probably to repay it that he allowed Ratu Lala to open commercial plantations in Cakaudrove. Fijian labourers were employed to develop stretches of coastline where Ratu Golea had acquired garden-rights. Contracts were entered into with the Holmhurst sugar estate for the supply of yams to its labourlines. The upshot was to be more trouble for Ratu Lala and embarrassment for his mentor.

Long before that blow fell, Thurston was treading the line between duty and affection with exaggerated care. He wanted stories that Lala was squeezing money out of his people investigated but was not sure it made sense to look into his drinking; and he was against government's concerning itself with Ratu Lala's sex life: 'to suppose a young fellow of the Roko's age, bursting with the Fijian equivalents of beef and beer - to be immaculate as regards women would be folly'. Let Ratu Epeli and other older shackled men envy him his bachelor freedom. On the strength of private reports from Adi Arieta, Thurston was disinclined to worry about lurid stories of concubines innumerable. Others had been wrong:

In one case wherein it was alleged he had taken away the daughter of Buli Natewa it was proved that this old man had not lost his daughter... The Chief had never seen her - did not even know of her -

The story however had a foundation. The old men of the place wanted this girl, and others, to be sent to him 'Vaka Viti', as had been the custom towards his progenitors, and he...was not only accused of the old men's intentions - but he had to bear their displeasure & resentment at the slight under which they considered themselves suffering at his inattention & departure from precedent -

32 FCSO 80/1369 and 200.
33 See, for example, his letter to Bréheret of 8 April 1883, Archdiocese of Suva Archives: Correspondence with Government 1856-1890; and for the background, FCSO 82/1955.
34 Memo. for des Voeux, 24 July 1884, loose FCSO paper.
Whether he now has a lot of concubines, or any, I do not know.

But this I know - That concubinage is not confined to any one Chief in Fiji - It is pretty common in the centres of civilization and has been found very hard to stop. Any one knowing the Fijian people will know that the sin, in itself, is looked upon very leniently - though it often forms a grand peg on which to hang a grievance. If Tui Cakau has taken young women away contrary to the wishes of themselves or their friends, or has exercised any despotic power in the matter he is worthy of punishment. But if he has nothing more than a woman or two about his fence - there of their own accord, and so on - and his open habit and manner of life is not scandalous - it seems to me that his private bachelor indiscretions would be for many reasons best left alone.

Thurston himself had heard the chimes at midnight, he did not fail to remember.

When one hears...a hot-blooded young fellow of twenty two is more fond of a wench than is consonant with the canons of Xtian morality, one offers him a little sound advice and hopes that he will soon sow his wild oats.35

His own superior, the Governor, probably thought this outspoken defence in poor taste. 'Day Vu' had an old maidish stomach. He was prickly in his determination to govern, and procrastinating. Having known his own moments of anguish, Thurston was sympathetic when des Voeux seemed hysterical.36 Self-doubt had never yet touched him when he was in command, though. He is likely to have remembered this as he considered how far the central administration's quality was falling off. An old associate went when Wilkinson retired in 1883. If there had to be anything like a 'Mumbo Jumbo', Wilkinson was incomparably the best man; his successor as Native Commissioner, James Blyth, had a sentimentality about

35 Ibid.
36 See his comments to Gordon, BM Add MSS 49204, and especially his letter quoted Gordon to Selborne, 7 January 1882, BM Add MSS 49218.
Fijians which Thurston despised. He told Gordon:

after a few years passed in our present style, we may get a physically, as well as morally, strong Governor, full of work and energy, and firmly convinced that the whole policy wants changing.

By then Wilkinson, MacGregor and he were likely to be dead or driven away; no one would be left to explain the principles:

and as the American skipper said, when describing the effects of his masts going over the side in a storm, there will be 'a great alteration'.

When the Governor could not govern except by fits of petulance there was likely to be trouble in the civil service of a Crown Colony, especially when the Colonial Secretary had superabundant energy, was openly spoken of as the most important individual in the Colony, but was still a marked man. MacGregor's denigration flowed ceaselessly to Gordon, the more violently after MacGregor learned that Gordon had named Thurston, not himself, as a possible successor. The Colonial Secretary was a hard man, said MacGregor - deficient in human sympathy, hating, and hated by, Fijians. His vosa kaukauawa, or tough language, was frightful to hear. And see how he put the screws on over the taxes!

Taxes in kind were part of Fijian life by now - were very much a Fijian thing, said Ratu Sukuna later; but no more popular than taxes anywhere. Copra came in from Lau, Cakaudrove and the Yasawas, sometimes in the government's ships, more often in the provinces' own vessels purchased with tax refunds. Tobacco was carried from the hills, sugar was trucked from the Rewa and Navua flats to the mills, and Thurston continued to enthuse over the advantages accruing to Fijians from government contracts with the baffled European business community. Traders in the Yasawas were offering £6 a ton for copra when the contractor paid £8.14.0, he pointed out in 1880; and £800 was due to the Yasawa people for three years' refunds.

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37 Thurston to Gordon, 4 November 1881, extract encl. Gordon to Selborne, 30 November 1881, BM Add MSS 49218.
38 MacGregor's letters to Gordon, BM Add MSS 49203 — especially his 10 June 1881.
39 FCSO 81/51.
Such delay in refunding was one drawback to the scheme. Yasawas preferred to sell surpluses locally for ready cash rather than send it to Suva for the higher contract price. Another drawback was that prices were not constant on the world market. After copra fell in 1881 - sending the contractor bankrupt - the copra-paying provinces had to make some 500 lbs per man instead of the 300 lbs that had sufficed before. And other communities often made a pitiful return from their cotton, maize, candlenuts or tobacco. On the other hand, from eight tons of tobacco grown in Colo for 1882, the people got a refund of £596 on their £400 assessment. This enabled Thurston to point out that where men would plant as directed, scientifically, they had no need to migrate far afield.40

He was raising still another difficulty, for Fijians never learned to love the direction of his European garden-inspectors. He was reminded of it again in 1882, over Ra. Cheered by requests for guidance in sugar planting there for a new mill at Penang, he looked forward to keeping the Ra men at home. Their £460 refund for 1878-9 on an £850 assessment had mainly come from commutation-tax paid by men engaged to planters - a blot on the policy. Now the mill contracted to take Fijian cane at eleven shillings a ton (a shilling higher than the C.S.R. Co. paid). Ra could expect £1,650 gross from 300 tons grown on a hundred acres, with £370 to deduct for the cost of a tramline. So he planned - but next year was in despair at Fijians' reluctance to maintain the field, with or without European direction.41

Native Taxes yielded the largest single item after customs. The cheeseparing Colony could not be run with greater economy. And it was better, Thurston still believed, for a Fijian to work hard near his home than to leave his family for a year to develop European land. Fijians did grow cane commercially. When the first ten years of cane-production on the Rewa ended with the crushing season of 1889, the three river provinces of Tailevu, Rewa and Naitasiri had grown 53,870 tons worth £29,599 at the C.S.R. Co.'s mill (less £101 for hire of trucks and tramway from the fields). This was achieved on a cultivated area which decreased from the 500 acres originally planted, as methods improved. In 1889

40 Minute 20 December 1882, FCSO 85/1161.
41 FCSO, n.d., memorandum 28 July 1882; FCSO 83/432, encl. in 83/1469.
assessed native taxes for all Fiji were £18,540, while the total value of produce received was £21,755 in sugar, copra, maize, tobacco and some coffee and bêche-de-mer. Of the resulting £5,152 refund, £1,027 went to Tailevu (with an adult population of about 7,117), £111 to Naitasiri (with 1,262), £213 to Rewa (with 2,770), while as much as £2,339 went to the 5,963 of Ba and Yasawas where the C.S.R. Co. had opened a new mill in 1884 in climatic conditions better for cane than the rain-sodden Rewa.42 On the other hand, the copra provinces were envying the cane-growers their refund-providing crop. The same year Lau, Cakaudrove, Macuata, Bua and Lomaiviti had a deficit of almost £2,000. Cane was less susceptible to long-lasting hurricane damage than coconuts; nor was the market for sugar as unstable as for, say, copra and tobacco.

Sugar-cane growing was a commercial success for Fijians. But, however, welcome the refunds, the work was not light. It involved up to a month of sustained labour in gangs under direction - work such as had gone into community projects generations earlier, but not without compulsion. On the Rewa, cane-growing needed the direct supervision of a white inspector, R.M. Wilson. He got Fijians into the fields by resorting to the talaidredre regulation after he had alternately pleaded with, cajoled or threatened three rokos, each of them with other uses for his men. In April 1882, for instance, Wilson was complaining that orders had gone out from Roko Tui Rewa for every man to come up with ten shillings to buy a new provincial vessel - and youths were off to Taveuni to earn it from European planters.43

The old cry that men would rather seek peace and fairly quick returns on European plantations was not reduced by the coming of cane - in the interests of which, in the early days, Thurston had made speeches extolling the advantages of making land available to the C.S.R. Co., and had brought down the first refunds in proof that Fijians did not go unpaid for working their own land. It was never so simple. People did not always have flats suitable for cane, even on the Rewa, and disharmony could result when they borrowed land from their neighbours. Refunds came slowly, and did not always leave the fingers of the Fijian officials who divided them.

42 FCSO 90/742 (encl. 93/2957), 90/1333, 2663.
43 Wilson to Col. Sec., 8 April 1882, FCSO 82/1020.
But in the first ten years the main cry from Rewa was that men were overworked. 'They say "Two things are to be seen in our Province"' - Thurston read in a letter which Ratu Vuki wrote after going overland to Ba in 1883 - "'First that we who work in the plantations will be dying and 2nd that famine will spring up in our towns'. 44 Investigating, Thurston learned that a man had died in the cane-field or at any rate became sick there; but only one. As to the Buretu people, whose starvation-lament Ratu Vuki had particularly reported, they had planted eleven acres of their own indifferent land, then had had to plant again on thirteen fertile acres borrowed from Nakelo, and after that (since Wilson feared this replacement crop would not meet the assessment) had been sent by their Roko to cut 70 bags of copra. In the event, they would actually receive a £74 cane refund plus the full value of the copra. The labour involved could hardly have so totally occupied a hundred men that they could not plant food. 45

With this evidence before him in March 1883, Thurston turned back to Ratu Vuki's letter. The subtle old Bauan had been proved two-faced lately. 'I do not know what he is driving at, but instinctively feel it is mischief...' Just as Thurston saw men who had been hard-worked in old Fiji when he looked at the complaining, cane-growing Lewe ni vanua, so he recalled days of war and intrigue when he talked to the older chiefs. As the first rank died, Ratu Vuki became notable among the mid-generation. He was 'able, cool, crafty & absolutely fearless'. 46 He hated Europeans. And with Ratu Cakobau dead he would especially bear watching, for now there was the possibility of a power vacuum he could exploit at Bau.

With Governor and Native Commissioner both inefficient, Thurston's view of his own role had no cause to change. He knew men, did not sentimentalise Fijians, and could predict individuals' likely reactions from their histories. Ratu Epeli became angry when the Rewa Sugar Company's manager, William Mune, contracted with Bau to clear 300 acres of bush at £4 per acre. Thurston told Carew privately:

44 Ratu Vuki to Native Commissioner, 7 January 1883, FCSO 83/431, encl. in 83/1461.
45 Letters and minutes, ibid.
46 Minute 13 March 1883, ibid.
Such a contract would be perfectly legal and unobjectionable but I find that it has quite upset Ratu Epeli - and he asks - Why when we can earn money so easily as this should we grind away all year in our sugar cane plantations?

Now I have reason to think that he and his Bulis are at loggerheads - They refused (about the time I last met you) to build houses at Bau & he is dreadfully sore over the matter.

Their real reason was that they want to kick off Bau exactions which I am sometimes told are very harsh and irritating. When brought face to face [with Ratu Epeli] these Bulis from force of habit funk speaking out their whole minds & Fijian like they say - 'our own work and the work of the Government (meaning by that their tax gardens and all their own local government work) presses upon us' -

The[n] Epeli balancing in his own mind the personal benefit he receives from commanding the services of the people at his mere will and pleasure - & the duty he owes to Government says - 'Let Native taxation go I do not understand it - I never did understand it Why should we not pay in money when we could earn our tax - in a few days' - thinking of this extravagant arrangement with Mune -

If this could be arranged to his satisfaction - there would be no bar to his command and use of the men - at least he thinks so. If the Govt did not get the money - well & good - If it did do so, probably the money, he fancies, would pass through his hands, so he would get a comsn. on the jobs performed by his people when working to procure money for taxes. The Bulis do not want to give up their gardens - Epeli has just cleverly turned upon them their own excuse - 47

As to Ratu Vuki, he wanted to start cane planting in his own province, with an eye to the refunds. His letter was probably prompted by the desire to keep a counterpart of

47Thurston to Carew, 25 April 1884, Carew Papers.
Wilson off his back.\textsuperscript{48} By March 1883 though, any action of the Roko Tui Ba was open to suspicion. Cakobau's half-brother's son, he was now the oldest living male member of the Vunivalu of Bau's lineage. Fijians at large were asking each other how matters now stood with the leading lineage of Bau. The brothers Epeli, Timoci and Josefa were themselves wondering how to render their futures secure. And their elder and cryptic rival Ratu Vuki stood in the wings, ready to stage-manage an intrigue redolent of old Fiji.

\textsuperscript{48} Thurston minute 13 March 1883, loc. cit.
Chapter 8

'The British Jingo is pretty bad property, but...'

There was, meantime, a proselytising side to a policy which enabled Ratu Vuki to keep up old style intrigues. Rolling up to Tonga against the trades in the lightly laden steamer *Ocean Queen* on Western Pacific High Commission business in 1881, Thurston had been wondering how far he could export the Crown Colony's way of doing things to the Kingdom. Not very far, was likely to be the answer. Shirley Baker, withdrawn by the Wesleyan Mission under High Commission pressure, had returned and was now openly set up as Premier to King George Tupou.

In consequence, Baker's notion of ensuring Tongan independence by encouraging Tongans in their propensity to imitate Europeans was being quoted against the Fijian way. This attracted Robert Swanston who had been dismissed as Deputy Commissioner in Samoa after falling out with the Consuls. He was struggling along with Ma'afu's remnant of returning Tongans aboard the schooner *Mata ki Tonga* in the hope of a job in Baker's government. Thurston wrote: 'Baker I fancy will reply...as one of the fugitives at the Battle of Nasova did to George Morgan "I am sorry for you my dear fellow but this hole wont hold two".'¹ He was right and Swanston had to go seek his bread as a trader in Micronesia.

'The Honble and Revd Shirley Waldemar Baker', the new Premier styled himself, Thurston discovered. He did not fail to mock the fallen missionary who remained ponderous, unctuous and sly. 'He reminds me very much of Woods.' Thurston was willing enough to be pleasant over the diplomatic punctilios which were thought appropriate to their discussion about the final form of the Anglo-Tongan Treaty. Official calls were heavily in vogue, visiting cards *de rigueur*:

The Crown Prince, who came in a white duck costume with gilt buttons & some gold braid, indicated his

¹For this and following quotations see Thurston to Gordon, 17 and 23 May 1881, BM Add MSS 49204; cf also Swanston's Journal.
love of comfort by wearing very large carpet slippers - By way of making the incongruity more startling he sported a very nice helmet hat of a strong Military persuasion - He apologised over and over again for having forgotten his cards.

It is irritating to see these people, who in good hands would be excellent & happy beings being made such fools of -

It had been a mistake, though for the High Commission to represent Baker as a devil: 'So long as we refuse to vouchsafe him any credit for good intentions - and so long as we run counter to him in every way - so long do we strengthen him - for he is perpetually on his guard'. Let Baker dig his own pit and fall into it unaided. For the moment, he seemed inclined to accept advice from Fiji - on the best way to keep government accounts for instance; and with the Godefroy firm now 'as dead, or nearly so, as Herod', he was looking to New Zealand for commercial help.

This touched one of Thurston's own ambitions. Still brooding over his plan to make Fiji the South Seas entrepôt, he drew Baker out on the latter's links with the Auckland commercial world. As an evening visitor at the consulate Baker was forthcoming enough: 'He almost gushed and if he would only have smoked or drunk might have been turned inside out'. There was to be a sugar company launched in Tonga, Thurston gathered, the capital to be raised among 'that select circle of speculators' who now comprised the New Zealand Government - men whose attentions so far had been confined to Maori lands but who had half an eye to the South Sea Islands. Baker spoke of the land speculator F.C. Whittaker (Attorney-General of New Zealand) as a great friend - 'and of course I asked in a childlike and bland way - who Whittaker was'. He was one of those who felt that Islands like Tonga and Samoa, so few days sail from Auckland, should be attached to the Britain of the South Seas.

New Zealand imperialism in the Pacific was something Thurston disliked - the more so since New Zealand's claim to rule Pacific Islanders was usually argued from the Pakeha's supposedly good record in dealing with the Maori. That argument was tragi-comic. Thurston was between tears and laughter when Pakeha politicians announced South Britannia's manifest destiny in the Pacific. 'The British Jingo is pretty bad property, but he isn't "a circumstance" as sailors say, to
the Colonial Jingo.' In 1883 Sir George Grey's Confederation and Annexation Bill passed the legislature in Wellington, enabling it to accept the rule of any Pacific Islands which offered to attach themselves to New Zealand's large national debt. An annexation craze was stirring Australia too:

Australia with a population of more than a Million less than that of London and with 0.887 of a man to the square mile of its area wants to annex New Guinea, New Ireland, the Solomons, and New Hebrides. The Colony of New Zealand...with a population less than that of Liverpool wants to annex 'all the Islands of the Pacific and relieve England of any further anxiety or responsibility in regard to Fiji' - stupendous cheek and insolence! From the Arctic to the Antarctic Pole, nothing less will satisfy the descendants of the Gigantic Moa.

New Zealand colonists, according to their publicists, were prepared to challenge Europe generally in the Pacific, and Germany in Samoa particularly - 'and yet one second class ship of Germany, France, Russia or America, could, in two hours, smash up any seaport they have got, and destroy all their shipping...'. It would be far wiser to concentrate on federating the Australasian colonies. 'Then in the event of a war we should take the other fellows Colony, if he had made one, after he had done all the hard work.' And then federate the whole Empire - 'an Empire that could successfully resist all the world in arms'. He did not think there was much statecraft to be found among Australasian politicians - or politicians anywhere. Mr Gladstone was in power. 'Most of them when they speak of the Nation or the State really mean themselves just as many Parsons when they speak of God and Heaven mean themselves and their own little brick built Ebenezer.'

If New Zealand's aspirations were ridiculous, Queensland's unilateral action in hoisting the flag in southern New Guinea in April 1883 was downright sinister. Her sugar-planters thought they needed cheap black labour.

If I found a starving man breaking into a baker's shop and he told me that he did it for the protection of the town and of the baker I should find it very hard to believe him...

2For this and following quotations, Thurston to Eliza Morton, 12 August 1883, Perrins Papers.
3Thurston to Kew, 6 October 1883, Kew Letters.
He paid less attention to the prospect of German intrusion into New Guinea. When the British flag went up again with metropolitan authorisation after Germany had jumped the gun on the north coast, he did not care for the arrangement by which Queensland was to administer the new Protectorate. Even so, he let himself consider the prospect of promotion there. It would be rough work, but to his taste so long as he had a free hand. He would need only a judicial officer, a chief of police, an expert hangman and two small warships. No Papuan should be allowed to leave the country for any purpose whatever; and the hangman should be set freely to work on the bird-of-paradise hunters and explorers whose blazing rifles he deplored.4

He would have said so perhaps at the second Intercolonial Conference, held in Sydney in November 1883, if he had followed Colonial Office instructions and attended as an imperial observer; but des Voeux chose to go instead, since he was about to depart gratefully on leave. With equal relief to have the vacillating Governor out of his way, Thurston was left to administer Fiji from November 1883 to September 1884. The Colonial Office remarked as a matter of course that he was the ablest man in the country.5

As Assistant High Commissioner, he had all the international complications of the Western Pacific on his hands. New Zealand's 'aspirations' would worry Germany he thought. 'I hope this Jingo feeling will cease', he told Gordon, 'but I fear it will urge Foreign Powers to take action upon what as yet have been only half intentions with them.'6 The 'successors of the moa' were stirring the Germans up to defend their interests in Samoa by talking about New Zealand's manifest destiny there. Thurston doubted whether many New Zealanders gave a tinker's curse for the Pacific Islands, but the 'destiny' line was a useful national rallying call for public figures like that mischievous old charlatan, Sir George Grey.

The Germans were accordingly disturbed. About the same time, Samoa's titular King Malietoa Laupepa was petitioning for British rule from Fiji - in fear of one of Grey's alleged envoys, Thurston liked to think, since Malietoa had just

4 Kew Letters.
5 Minutes on Thurston to C.O., 31 December 1883, CO83/34.
6 Thurston to Gordon, 12 August 1883, BM Add MSS 49218.
asked the Deputy Commissioner to deport him. Thurston had always thought it desirable that Samoa and Tonga too should remain 'in a state of native independency', he reminded the Colonial Office through des Voeux. He had 'advocated the justice as well as the policy' of non-intervention by European powers, but he doubted that what he had failed to accomplish for Fiji in 1873–4 could be brought off elsewhere in the 1880s. In Samoa itself, non-intervention had long been given up. American, British and German treaties existed. Local consular agreements provided for major European oversight of the Samoan government. Apia itself was a municipality under direct European administration. 'As regards Samoa constant intervention is the order of the day', he said truly. His experience taught that the Pacific Islanders could not maintain their own governments without becoming disastrously involved with European powers while providing playgrounds for 'private speculators and low class adventurers'. He was probably thinking of Woods as well as the New Zealanders.

I am compelled, in spite of my desires, to see and admit that the present state of things cannot go on much longer. It is true that as regards Samoa there exists a nominal King and Government, but for years past peace and order have been maintained... by German and English men of war, and German and English Consuls, and so long as the present mockery of Government continued there, the same thing must continue...

Unless Britain receded from its present treaty relations with Samoa, 'Her Majesty's Government are likely to incur many of the obligations and collateral responsibilities of dominion without any of its rights and domain.'

Tonga's future was of more intimate concern to Fiji, though he did not yet admit it. He had been staggered by laws enacted there late in 1882. The High Commission protested against them by warship. Treason was given a wide definition in the Kingdom of Tonga. 'One could scarcely comment without "committing treason against His Majesty" by throwing "ridicule" on the Govt.' Here was a press manacled, contrary to provisions in the 1875 Constitution that it should be free. Here was 'a premier drawing a Revenue from Adultery,

7Thurston to des Voeux, 1 December 1883, WPHC Outward Letters, General; encl. des Voeux to C.O., 19 December 1883, CO225/12.
an ex-minister preaching and *enacting* unforgiveness*: under these laws, no husband might forgive an erring wife a second time, while her lover must pay one fine to the husband and another to the government.8

Though he still felt Baker should be left to destroy himself, Thurston reckoned the day was coming closer. There was a groundswell of Tongan resentment. Baker was no friend to Vilisme Tugi, descendant of the Tu'i Tonga and, with Ma'afu gone, a likely contender for the throne when Tupou himself should die - as soon, surely, he must. Already some of Tugi's people had petitioned the Queen for Baker's removal - had been imprisoned for their 'treason'. Baker had now become 'the tyrant of Tonga' to Thurston.9 'When the present Government fails, which it will do upon the death of Tubou...' - he warned the Colonial Office - 'the whole group will fall into confusion, and its people in the words of Malietoa, will ask Her Majesty's Government to do for them "the same as it has done in Fiji".'10

There spoke, of course, not the Assistant High Commissioner but the Administrator of Fiji. Thurston always wanted to represent the Fijians' lot as envied by Tongans and Samoans. And while he was writing this, in 1883, he felt the need to do so with especial vigour. He had to counter the enthusiastic reception by his local whites of New Zealand's lately reiterated aspiration to relieve Britain of her responsibilities in Fiji too. A 'gin inspired' article in the *New Zealand Herald* called on 'the people' of New Zealand to help 'the people' of Fiji throw off their colonial bondage, best done by enabling them to federate with the free settlers of Southern Britannia.

Reference both in the Colonial journals, and by public men, is made to the readiness of the 'people of Fiji' to take this step, their anxious desire, in fact, to do so. By 'people' they mean the 2700 men, women and children of European extraction in Fiji - Of the 115,000 native born Fijians who gave their country to The Queen as a safeguard chiefly against the Queen's subjects (see my remarks to Sir

8 WPHC Inward correspondence, General, 83/33.
9 Ibid.; RNAS 42.
10 Thurston to des Voeux, 1 December 1883, loc. cit.
Hercules Robinson when handing him Thakobau's Club) they never even think.\textsuperscript{11}

Here was Baker's friend Whittaker telling the House of Representatives how desirable it was to unite Fiji and Samoa with New Zealand; here was a reference to J.C. Richmond as a recent visitor to the oppressive Crown Colony, able to confirm Whittaker's view that Fijians had less freedom than the happy Maori - who were at liberty to sell land and acquire the capitalist ethic if they could. But then,

When you find him saying 'We have more experience than the Mother Country in governing a mixed race and in our thirty-five or forty years' experience we have shewn an impartial temper in governing a race more difficult to deal with than the natives of Fiji'! you will not be surprised at any infatuation or self-delusion.

If the Colonial Office did not stand firm on the principle that Fiji was the Crown's direct responsibility (the point he had made when handing over Cakobau's club), then 'we shall ere long be addressing the local Legislature - (and with as little good) in the terms of Wahanui's Petition.' Wahanui and his fellow Kingites wanted the Native Land Court kept out of their district, having seen how Maori land was lost to the speculators when the court's frauds, corruption and demoralising effect were brought to bear. 'What a pitiful story it is' - Thurston commented - 'and how truly it refers to things which we know must, and will, happen [in Fiji] if we are not stern and strong enough to stand up against and beat them back.'

He was strong against public meetings in Levuka and Suva. They wanted to petition the Queen for whites to be 'relieved from what they regard as the humiliating position in which they are at present politically placed' - as he put it.\textsuperscript{12}

His old friend R.B. Leefe went off to the Intercolonial Conference with a memorial seeking Fiji's incorporation with Australasia. Leefe was on the rocks. Incorporation, with

\textsuperscript{11} For these and following quotations, see Thurston to Gordon, 12 August 1883, BM Add MSS 49218.

\textsuperscript{12} Thurston to C.O., 27 November 1883, CO83/34; petition enclosed.
the relaxed labour and other ordinances which would surely follow, might save his plantation from its creditors.  

Crown Colony rule was 'altogether opposed to the spirit of the age', the memorialists affirmed. It inhibited investment, 'checks the producing instinct by unnecessary restrictions' and put honest would-be producers in a bondage that was indicated by the fact that in a country with a total revenue of £98,000, 'the people are denied any voice' in its spending. Unofficial members of Legislative Council were powerless against the official majority; there was not even self-government for Suva. From all these disabilities they begged relief - 'with due regard for the preservation of all existing rights and privileges of the Native Races...'

For good measure Leefe assured the Secretary of State that Fijians would revolt before long. He had said so in Legislative Council while speaking against the enslaving Native Labour Ordinance 1883, with its obvious intent to keep men pottering about their villages growing three shillings' worth, regardless of the innate right of any British subject to sell his labour to the highest bidder. More recently missionary reports had confirmed that there was unrest. 'The Hon Mr Leefe', Thurston retorted, in a report which made the Colonial Office feel that he was the next Governor, 'is dissatisfied with the form of Government and the restrictions placed upon the inexpedient measures he would adopt for obtaining Native labourers'. And so Leefe concluded Fijians too were dissatisfied, which humanly, and humorously, speaking was a not unnatural though highly illogical conclusion.

The petition gave Thurston little difficulty. By the end of his life he was to have given Downing Street the feeling he enjoyed having his coat-tails trodden on. The whites were no more compelling when E.W. Knox (Chairman of the C.S.R. Co.) joined Leefe, along with his fellow Legislative Council members James McEvoy, Thurston's friend J.C. Smith and C.B. Chalmers of Penang Mill, in approaching the Premier of New Zealand, after the Intercolonial Conference had declined to hear the petition. There were factual errors to be pointed out.

13 C.S.R. Co. Archives reveal Leefe's financial troubles.
14 Memorial to Federal Convention, 19 September 1883, encl. Thurston to C.O., 27 November 1883, CO83/34.
15 Leefe to Secretary of State, 28 November 1883, CO83/34.
16 Thurston to C.O., 31 December 1883, CO83/34.
There was sport to be had with the petitioners' complaint that Legislative Council had never passed an ordinance introduced by an unofficial member. Only three attempts had ever been made by private members to introduce legislation, and they were all by Leefe, said Thurston.

Buckling down to political economy, he exposed the fallacy of the petitioners' refrain that Europeans were the only producers in Fiji, providing the bulk of the revenue. Revenue proper was some £48,000 in 1882. £35,567 of it came from customs, £17,000 from Native Taxes. About 2,700 Europeans could hardly have contributed £14.14.4 each to make up the customs receipts; in Victoria, for instance, the figure per capita was £2.1.10. On the contrary, Fijians probably paid more to the customs than Europeans, while it was uncontested that they carried the heavy produce tax unaided.

In most cases, continued the petitioners, appointments to the white public service had gone to cadets or others from overseas. Again their facts were wrong. Ninety-seven Europeans were employed by government as magistrates, doctors, clerks, or Hindustani interpreters and seventy-four of them were Fiji colonists. As to Suva's being deprived of local government, the petitioners well knew that a Municipal Ordinance was before Legislative Council.

When all misstatements had been countered, the central question remained to answer. He wanted a final definitive ruling from Downing Street:

Would Her Majesty's native subjects, who for the purpose of acquiring adequate protection against influences they had already learnt to dread, ceded the sovereignty of the islands to the Queen, be likely to benefit either by inclusion with a Federated Australia or by annexation to one of the Australian Colonies?

No one, I think, who is competent to give an opinion upon the question would fail to answer in the negative. Any such scheme would result in the rapid destruction of the whole race, which Her Majesty's Government is bound by every impulse of honor and humanity to save from such a fate. The Fijian, at no great length of time, would be demoralized: the native policy of Government and the social organization of the people would be broken.
up before any other controlling power or influence could be created; and the Fijians would die off before the incoming European settler, with his Indian or Chinese coolies, as surely as the Maori in the south and the Hawaiian in the north are dying now.  

Fijians were decreasing, his enemies could reply; and Indians were in Fiji, some 1,487 of them now, their presence sometimes resented by the itaukei. But Thurston intended they should be no threat to Fijians. They were to be kept out of villages, and even if they settled when their five years' indenture was up, they would not be entitled to political power. As to the Fijian decrease, remedy lay in Fijian hands. No inevitable waning before civilisation's benefits was at work among them, but neglect of young children which could be overcome - even if it did spring from monogamy and the decreased military value of sturdy boys as he suspected.

As to the oft alleged Fijian poverty under the native policy, look at the £25,000 they spent on boats between 1875 and 1883, he said. On the question of their continued political vitality, he could have added, observe the delicate business in Lomaiviti he had on hand while he was writing, involving Ratu Vuki and the sons of Cakobau.

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17 'Minute with reference to a Petition...by certain of the Colonists of Fiji', encl. Thurston to C.O., 28 April 1884, CO83/36.

18 Thurston to C.O., 21 October 1886, GBPP 1887 Vol. 58 [C.5039].
Chapter 9

'Men made by government'

Fijian government must be strong, and personal. Only through intensely personal authority was it that, at the Governor's word, a turbulent, tyrannical turaga would go without violence into exile, or muscular men accept imprisonment in frail reed houses. So Thurston assured anyone who would listen.\(^1\) His was government eyeball to eyeball, subject to momentary crises as the point came when one side must waver. And a major crisis had been brewing in Lomaiviti when he moved into Government House as Administrator in November 1883. Involved were two in some ways contradictory principles, nonetheless fundamental to the country's rule—that a Roko Tui and his bulis held office in virtue of appointment by the Crown but would not be acceptable or effective without local legitimacy.

Officials of the Fijian Administration must be men of rank where they ruled. Fijians demanded it. The Ra plot against Ratu Isikeli Tabakaucoro had made the point. On his death in 1880 government had put in Ratu Tevita Rasuraki, the Buan chief with kin-ties in Ra whom the plotters had seen as a possible Roko. And it had been necessary to have the leading plotter Ratu Alivate Vutoni reappointed Buli Rakiraki.

Turaga interpreted the ceremony where they installed the Governor as one at which, in a sense, they appointed him.\(^2\) It was perhaps only Ratu Cakobau who had seen the first installation as a one-way transmission of power. The other turaga felt much flowed back to them. They assumed they preserved a prescriptive right to rule their own lands and people. And where they continued to rule, there was substantial peace. Councils deliberated, taxes came in, no officials' houses went up in flames. Only Ratu Vuki as Roko Tui Ba was faced with revolt, powerful character though he

\(^1\) Memorandum encl. des Voeux to C.O., 2 December 1884, CO83/38, for example.

\(^2\) FCSO 82/972, Carew and Wilkinson's discussion on this.
was and of rank at Bau, which had preponderant relations with some lineages of Ba. His case was parallel with Ratu Isikeli's. Each province wanted a man of its own soil as roko; and each roko wanted more than a voice in the choice of provincial officials. Vakadomuya - to agree to - was the formula used at the Bosevakaturaga when appointments were announced. The tone there and at the Native Regulations Board indicated that the turaga still claimed to rule. All this was agreeable for Thurston to reflect upon generally; but it became a decided danger at the end of 1883. He was caught out when a section of them contested government's new appointment to the office of Roko Tui Lomaiviti.

He was in no doubt how precarious was the tenure of foreign rokos like Ratu Vuki and even Ratu Tevita: 'but for the Govt., the people would expel both Rokos in a week'. Lomaiviti was a peculiarly difficult case, given its close ties with Bau coupled with the young Bauan chiefs' failure to come up to scratch. Now government went outside Bau. It appointed Ratu Marika Toroca, hereditary Roko Tui Namata, traditionally one of the bati to Bau. Having taken well to education, Ratu Marika had become Cakobau's clerk in the late 1860s. He was a Supreme Court Judge under the Kingdom and since Cession had been a Native Stipendiary Magistrate. A spokesman for the bulis at the Bosevakaturaga, he had come to be a useful gap-filler in the Fijian Administration. When he was given the Lomaiviti appointment, he was holding Rewa during one of Ratu Rabici's suspensions. His career was not one to excite sympathy from his hereditary seniors. Ratu Josefa Celua besieged his wife, as much to humiliate the husband as to enjoy the lady. And when he went to Lomaiviti, the Bauans saw to it that he was in fear of his life.

His appointment had met hostility in Lomaiviti before des Voeux left. Old landmarks were being overturned, protested the elders of Batiki: 'when we heard this we remembered the Vunivalu, but we thought of the Vunivalu being dead yet alive in your Excellency the Governor'. Let the Governor recall that he was, then, Vunivalu of Bau; let him not send Marika to rule men over whom he had no precedence. 'We have our chiefs - Roko Tui Tailevu and his two brothers.'

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3 Minute of 6 April 1883, FCSO 83/432, in 83/1464.
4 For Ratu Marika on his reception in Rewa, see FCSO 83/109.
5 Encls. des Voeux to C.O., 30 September 1884; and copies of most Lomaiviti papers are in Government House Miscellaneous Papers.
They got no answer from the notoriously inefficient Provincial Office until early November. More surprisingly, Thurston heard nothing of their objections until he became Administrator. Then 'very extraordinary reports' reached him. The Fiji Times published a letter from Na Uli Vou — 'The New Helm' — with the Lomaiviti viewpoint. When did they or their ancestors send mata to Namata, as they did to Bau? They and their ancestors were insulted by Marika's appointment. When des Voeux's answer was belatedly read to them on 11 December, it had no effect. They refused to recognize the unhappy Namatan. And Thurston was piqued that the Beach should have had accurate news before him. His 'little birds', proverbial in Fiji, had failed him here. He believed Na Uli Vou was Woods. Dismissed from the office Thurston had got him after becoming intolerable to his colleagues on the Marine Board, Woods was grubbing a living as a surveyor. A few months more and he was, briefly, editor of a new newspaper, the Polynesian Gazette, which had an even more virulent line than the Fiji Times. In this instance, it put the Fijian viewpoint very accurately.

'There is quite enough official sagacity in stock to arrange this very stupid business agreeably', Thurston assured Gordon as the press rejoiced that Nasova, which talked nothing but vakaviti, had been caught napping vakaviti. Here was an anonymous correspondent reminding the Fiji Times that the Sydney Morning Herald's Fiji reporter had been expecting trouble. That reporter was Lorimer Fison — 'a very good fellow in many ways', Thurston had recently told his sister, 'but bitterly hostile, as all the Mission are to Government, - and in addition a man who is rather fond of...telling a good story rather because it is good, than that it is true'. He resented these missionary reporters:

Having written — which they took precious good care to do — their own history, they have taken to writing that of the country from day to day — of course from their own narrow minded & ill informed standpoint.

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6 Copy ibid.
7 FCSO 83/1458-9, 83/2864.
8 Note on press cuttings, BM Add MSS 49239.
9 Thurston to Eliza Morton, 12 August 1883, Perrins Papers.
He had to agree that some of what Fison said was true. He thought Fison was the one Wesleyan missionary with a worthwhile understanding of Fijian societies. 'Why does he never give us a line or a word of friendly information?' he complained to Gordon. 'I see myself since Thakobau's death that many Chiefs are inclined to remember the past.' But this inclination to recall old political attachments and hostilities could be dealt with by firmness - just as he would deal with Lomaiviti. The province's letters lacked spontaneity: 'an emissary from Bau had gone round...obtaining these letters from the Bulis'.

When Ratu Cakobau was carried to the grave in May 1883 his sons' future had been discussed. Ratu Vuki proposed that Ratu Epeli should seek renewal of the pension to himself and, retiring with the title 'Vunivalu' also, should let Ratu Timoci succeed him as Roko Tui Tailevu; then Ratu Vuki himself, Vasu to Sawaike in the island of Gau in Lomaiviti, would return to his mother's homeland as Roko Tui Lomaiviti. Given up momentarily as result of Ratu Epeli's refusal, the plan had been reawakened when Lomaiviti reacted to Bauan hints; but, according to what Thurston now picked up, this intrigue was 'in a fair way of being rendered nugatory by a perfectly Fijian counter intrigue' launched by Ratu Vuki himself.

'Ratu Vuki is a bold and able man, a leading Fijian "diplomat" and an old enemy of the Vuni Valu family' - Thurston explained. Under the old government, 'Cakobau would certainly have settled long standing scores by hanging him, but for my intercession'. Now Ratu Vuki planned to incite Lomaiviti against Ratu Marika. He would then commend himself to government by quietening the turaga there through his local influence. He would achieve the office of Roko to which he was entitled, and strike a satisfying blow against the sons of Ratu Cakobau whom his seniority in years encouraged him to displace. 'In the endeavour' - wrote Thurston - to force upon the Governor an incapable son of Cakobau in place of an able, experienced, and worthy relation [by marriage], whose appointment would in no way have interfered with the

10 Notes on Fiji Times cuttings, BM Add MSS 49239.
11 For this and following quotations, see Thurston to des Voeux, 18 September 1884, encl. des Voeux to C.O., 30 September 1884, CO83/38, with copy of his diary.
family's rights or privileges, the Vuni Valu's children or their injudicious friends jeopardised their whole family influence and power.  

In the late '70s he had seen Ratu Vuki as a possible Roko Tui Lomaiviti; now he was disgusted with his rapacity in Ba.

Thurston had no force, nor wanted it; yet if he backed down, turaga might no longer go into exile at command. These considerations weighed the more because there were similar situations in other provinces. He was about to reinstate Ratu Rabici as Roko Tui Rewa; and the Roko Tui Nadroga had been summoned to Vale Levu - Government House - to answer for certain peccadilloes. Next February the Nadroga bulis protested against this summons as infringing their province's autonomy.

Thurston wrote to Ratu Epeli Nailatikau. He had instructed Ratu Vuki and Buli Sawaleke, his kinsman, that Ratu Marika must be installed and his house built at Gau, in token of acceptance. Now he would approach Ratu Epeli, suzerain of Lomaiviti - 'and before saying anything else I remind you that we are not strangers'. He called attention to anonymous hints in the press that Epeli was responsible for threats to Ratu Marika's life - not because he believed them, but 'because the letter only repeats what a great many people are saying, and believe true'. Marika would certainly be installed. He called for general support, and summoned him to Suva to Vale Levu.

This failed. Thurston's matanivanua returned from Gau to report that Buli Sawaleke sat silent under the order to build Ratu Marika's house while Ratu Vuki replied in effect that it must be built by force. No one would then recognize the new Roko. If the bulis could not get what they wanted by appeal to Vale Levu, said Ratu Vuki, tempting thunderbolts and tongue firmly in cheek, they would go to the Wesleyan Mission. And when Thurston left the rara at Burebasaga, after reinstating Roko Tui Rewa before an audience in whose faces he detected appreciation of the Lomaiviti confrontation, he was met by Ratu Epeli's own matanivanua. Ratu Epeli would

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12 Ibid.
14 Government House Miscellaneous Papers.
obey the summons to Vale Levu after Christmas. Meantime he had gone to Levuka, for beer and regattas, Thurston learned - and sent back peremptory orders to both Epeli and Vuki.

Ratu Vuki was to build no house for Marika if force was needed. Government would build it. He was to send his large following home to Ba while he reported to Suva to explain himself on a screed of complaint that Na Kena Vai had up his sleeve. As for Ratu Epeli, he had better not even stop at Bau for a fresh canoe crew on his way back from Levuka, but come straight to Vale Levu if he did not want Na Kena Vai's club across his neck. He arrived there on the night of 23 December, Thurston reported with satisfaction, 'having taken canoe without an instants delay when he found from the Mata ni Vanua awaiting him (one of his own tribesmen) that any further inattention to official commands would place him in an extremely dangerous position'.

He and Ratu Epeli had known each other for nineteen years. When another ten had passed Thurston was to reflect aloud what he had long thought. This son of Cakobau, not big or handsome as Thurston liked turaga to be, was a handicapped man among his Fijian peers. He lacked their polish. As to government, 'he submits to it because circumstances compel but on the whole he would probably prefer the state of things as they existed before annexation when the Chief of Bau enjoyed a comparatively large income and dealt with his people and their property pretty much as he pleased'. Ratu Epeli under-estimated the security he drew from the new order. Under the old, he would probably have been clubbed on his father's death at the instigation of 'some equally selfish but more able and resolute competitor'. 'As a leader in Fijian society as it was', Thurston summed it up, perhaps with his inspiring young subordinate Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi in mind as the competitor, 'Ratu Epeli's career would have rapidly come to an end'. He had no hesitation in overbearing Epeli now. Without his involvement, or his family's, the Lomaiviti chiefs would never have dared resist, Thurston told Epeli. Ratu Marika was the only man capable of administering the province; he must be accepted. 'From this time out' - Thurston ended - 'opposition dropped excepting from the local newspapers.'

15 Thurston to des Voeux, 18 September 1884, loc. cit.
16 Thurston to C.O., 16 July 1894, C083/59.
17 Thurston to des Voeux, 18 September 1884, loc. cit.
He was in good voice when he installed Ratu Marika at Sawaieke in February 1884, for he had just been 'examining Roko Tui Ba on various points' - he told his fellow old Fiji hand, Walter Carew - and had 'somewhat disconcerted him as I exposed his little games one after the other'. One of Ratu Vuki's maxims was that Fijians were a closed book to the European. It amused Na Kena Vai to show him differently. The relationship between Thurston and Fijians had changed since 1874 when he sat in council at Bau advising men from whom alone he drew his own legitimacy. He had other sources now. Seated before the semi-circle at Sawaieke, he spoke as their master - though again, only because they knew and accepted him, so he rationalised it; while they, their tactics imply, heard him out resignedly in the determination to make his emissary Marika's life intolerable. They would appreciate, meantime, the strong arm - na liqa qaqa - by which a true turaga rules when he must:

You were sullen and angry. You would agree to nothing. Some of you - I know who they were and see them in the meeting - some of you talked of clubbing Marika. Others of you talked of coming in a body to Suva in order as you explained it that I might 'put you in gaol with Buli Moturiki'.

Now some of you who came on board ship to welcome me this morning tell me that these utterances meant nothing - that it was 'talk' and nothing more.

Very well. It is a new kind of talk, one that if continued will bring upon you punishment, and therefore I warn you against its continuance.

He had not gaoled Buli Moturiki, the Bau chiefs' emissary. 'Why should I do so? Is he a man whose machinations I cannot prevent?' Their voice in the land was not dead: but it must not be heard in 'talk - even talk - about clubbing'. Let that finish here.

If any Buli present thinks of clubbing, let him come up here now to my mat and tell me so, or let him abandon such an unsavoury style of talking or some day it may cause his own death.

As to appointments, let their minds be clear:

18 Thurston to Carew, 1 February 1884, Carew Papers.
The Roko Tui will always be chosen from the Chief House of the Province if an able, active and loyal man can be found in it - but not otherwise. This is no new thing to say - you know it. Government will not appoint a Roko or a Buli - who is an oppressor, or a thief, a drunkard, or a man of notoriously bad character simply because he is of the Chief family.

Why should they object, he asked? Among the men now facing him - some young when they first met and now grey with years, some who were youths then and now were in their prime - most owed their offices to government appointment, not to birth. So many chiefs of the land had died in the measles epidemic that 'nobodies' had had to be appointed in their place. 'And yet you are the men - men made by Government - who complain of Ratu Marika and say "His Gods are not our Gods".'

That was rhetoric. Most of the Lomaiviti bulis had actually held office before the epidemic. And their theme that no official was acceptable whose precedence did not spring from the blood and mud of his province was repeated that same year from one of the examples he named, Ba. Encouraged by Ratu Vuki's bad odour at Vale Levu, his province gave over burning him out of his house - they used to tell commissions of enquiry the rats in the thatch had set light to it. Instead, the bulis made a formal complaint. They proved that his yam gardens were on a grandiose scale. And though he was generous with seed-yams, it was clear he sold the bulk of the produce to the sugar company. He was like Ratu Lala in this, except that Ratu Lala paid his labourers - and that they were his own people. It was because Ratu Vuki was a stranger that Ba province combined against him, not solely because he was heavy-handed.

Back at last on his own yavu at Bau, dismissed from Ba, but not content, Ratu Vuki continued to exercise his diplomacy against Ratu Marika in Lomaiviti, and in Taileu too, when the Bau and Namata people fell out over rents next year. In Ba the old theme, only a little modulated, was repeated under his successor. The new Roko Tui Ba was shrewd, energetic Ratu Neimani Dreu. He was of the soil but had no seniority

19 Diary, Government House Miscellaneous Papers.
20 FCSO 84/64.
Plate 7 The colonial seal upon traditional authority: Sir John Thurston installs Ratu Tevita Rasuraki as Roko Tui Bua, 1889.

Plate 8 'Sir John travels like Stanley in Africa' — Henry Adams.
in blood over his fellow chiefs in the province. Accordingly his house too was set afire 'by rats'.

To some of Thurston's white colleagues, Lomaiviti was more evidence of the need to replace Fijian rokos with European Commissioners. He disagreed. Lomaiviti was simply an exemplification of the truth he wished everybody to live with: the colonial administration's primacy among Fijians was achieved face to face. It was dependent on knowledge of long-standing political relationships; and it required an ear for the language. It was useful to know, for instance, that *veitaitia o iko* could mean 'do as you please', 'do it if you dare', 'let it alone' or 'go to the devil'—as tone and context revealed. He thought it also required an ordinance to restrict settler 'interference'. He was a man to suspend not only newspapers, but journalists too, the Colonial Office concluded. He became frantic in mid-1884 when the *Polynesian Gazette* published virtual incitement to rebellion—a string of doggerel invoking the vengeance of dead chiefs on their peoples' current oppressors. 'Son of Tanoa! What doth thou hear: Thy people are doomed to decay.' It was wretched stuff, rotten grammatical construction and poor prosody apart; but Father Bréheret agreed that, translated, it would have its effect. *Drau ni Kau* was the likely resort of the enslaved Fijian, said poor exploded old George Augustus Woods in his new though transient role of editor. At any rate one of the Government House set should know what *Drau ni Kau* was—witchcraft, poison.

21 FCSO 87/769.

22 Thurston to Powell, 21 June 1886, Wilfred Powell Papers.

23 *Polynesian Gazette*, 29 July, 19 August 1884, cuttings encl. des Voeux to C.O., 2 December 1884, CO83/38.
‘The native will be sold’

In Fiji, 'justice means giving everybody just what they ask for'. A remark of no profundity, its validity was regularly illustrated, and never more vividly than when Thurston lay recovering from a fall from his horse in September 1884. He was writing an answer to Carl Sahl's demand for preferential treatment on land claims.

Sometime German Consul-General in Sydney, Sahl was well placed to take his grievances to the Reichschancellor. Accordingly, Bismarck assured the Kaiser's Ambassador to the Court of St James that legal land titles in the possession of good German nationals had been set aside by a Lands Claim Commission composed of administrators, not lawyers. As a result, large areas alienated under customary pre-Cession process had been returned to the undeserving Fijians or had gone into the colonial government's maw. Sahl had been robbed of thousands of acres, said Sahl. His Valavala block of some 13,000 acres on Natewa bay, purchased from Tui Cakau in the late 1860s, was now ripe for development, but only 2000 acres of it had been granted.

As Sahl put it, wide-eyed but incautious, to Thurston, he was not informed why Valavala had been taken from him and so could not assess the motive. And it amused his old acquaintance J.B.T. to reflect how Sahl's financial motive in pressing for annexation had been disappointed. The Colony

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1 Minute 4 September 1880, on Bruce to Col. Sec., 30 August 1880, FCSO 80/1535.

2 The German side can be read in German Foreign Office material available on microfilm in National Library of Australia; see, also my 'Creditors and the House of Hennings: an elegy from the social and economic history of Fiji', Journal of Pacific History, VII, 1972.

3 Sahl to William Hennings, 7 April 1884, Hennings Papers.

4 Encl. Thurston to C.O., 7 June 1884, COCP Australian, No. 102.
had not turned out quite as Sahl, like other capitalists, had expected; the joke was on the German. Better to have the C.S.R. Co. than Sahl and his fellow minor fry, for in the long run a big company, however selfish, could be more easily bought out than a host of small but noisy operators who, with their dependent settlers, could cry 'democracy' with equal credence and fewer qualms. Justice and expediency - one of Jack Thurston's favourite phrases - both destroyed Herr Sahl. To take his own particular instance, Valavala had never been out of Fijian possession except for a few score acres around a trading station. Sahl's demand to know why it had been transferred to the Fijians verged on the comic. As Thurston understood the German point of view: 'if a German subject possesses a piece of paper purporting to be a title of land, it is held, not that he should prove the goodness of such title, but that its goodness should be assumed without question'. Where no title existed, 'acquisition' would apparently do if positive proofs had not been lodged against its *bona fides*.5

The German Empire and the Fiji Lands Claims Commission differed on first principles. Yet Germans had done better than they had a right to expect. J.G. Pfluger was complaining that of 6200 acres, he had lost all but a hundred. The reality was that he had had five other claims granted in full, this one to the extent quoted, and only a seventh totally disallowed. He had actually been granted the Rewa land from which he was driven in 1868: unreasonably generous, Thurston reckoned. Again, Herren Hedemann and Pfeiffer were supposedly bereft of 40,000 acres and thirteen towns - 'illusory acquisitions gained at the cost of a penny an acre today in the hope of selling them at a pound an acre tomorrow...'. Thurston allowed himself a little more mockery:

Is it...not perceptible on the very face of these claims that Messrs Hedemann and Pfeiffer desired the Colonial Government to give them lands of which they did not and could not acquire possession prior to annexation, and to give it to them at the expense of other men, also entitled to justice, in possession of the land by the most perfect, valid, and sacred title known to mankind, at the expense, in fact, of men who were in possession of their fatherland.6

5 Thurston's memorandum on German Land Claims, September 1884, COCP Australian, No. 106.
6 Thurston to des Voeux, 29 September 1884, ibid.
He was prepared to prove Sahl's losses were equally illusory. Sahl put his case with amazing ignorance or magnificent dishonesty. On one point only was his complaint plausible: both the Lands Claims Commission and the Appeals Tribunal were very much subject to government influence. Still, it was not hard to answer that:

Mr Sahl has all along accepted the decision of the ...Tribunal...when given in his favour. He has for a long time past charged it with incompetency, interested malice, want of independence, and general injustice when its decisions have been against him.7

Far from wife, new daughter and the trumpet-flower when he wrote this, Thurston was in a London hotel. On 6 October 1884 barely out of his sick-bed, he had been sent off to Sydney at forty-eight hours' notice to await the Colonial Office's sanctioning his urgent return 'Home' to fend off the Germans. Very suddenly, the British Government had given in to Bismarck. A special Anglo-German Commission was to inquire into these land claims. And Thurston, said des Voeux, was surely needed to advise London personally on other matters too. There was no one else whose knowledge of the Western Pacific was so complete and so valuable. The Colonial Office thought so too but, since it expected the commission to sit in Fiji, complained initially that commissioners on arrival there had better find Thurston present and vacillating des Voeux absent.8 After fifteen days in Sydney, though, missing a P. and O. steamer while the German Consul-General embarked, Thurston received a London cable - 'Come Home at once'.9 The Commission was to meet there after all. He chased the steamer to Melbourne, talked at Colombo with a pessimistic Gordon,10 and landed at Plymouth on 1 January 1885. Three weeks after his arrival a new German White Book made public the sudden change of ground by the British Foreign Office in July which had led to the commission's sitting at all, after endless well-founded British

7 Thurston to C.O., 17 February 1885, CO83/42.
8 Minutes on des Voeux to C.O., 17 October 1884 (cable), CO83/38; full correspondence is printed in COCP Australian, No.102.
9 Ibid., and minutes on Thurston to C.O., 24 October 1884 (cable), CO83/39; FCSO 84/2831.
10 Stanmore to Selborne, 23 February and 25 March 1885, BM Add MSS 49219.
assurances that there was no reason for it. And he saw that pessimism was justified. The ground had been cut from under his feet before he left Fiji.

'We are being grossly humiliated' - Thurston assured F. Chesson, Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society, a new acquaintance:

After firm and proper resistance to the unjust demands of Germany in respect of claims to Native Lands of my Colony - Lord Granville gives way when he is bluntly told 'how seriously' Bismarck intended to take any refusal to accede to his demands. He does not even wait for C.O. to send in a most able reply to the last German 'Pro Memoria' so that when it is received by the Berlin F.O. it is contemp­tously regarded as 'having only a retrospective interest' - Lord Granville having abandoned the standpoint in it which he took up four weeks ago.

Thus our Foreign Minister permits himself to be 'bluffed' - excuse the expressive Americanism - by England's greatest and ablest enemy in Europe.11

The reason was not hard to guess. Bismarck found it useful to show his own commercial pressure-groups that the friendly relations with London which he displayed by his support against France over Egypt, enabled him to exact a quid pro quo elsewhere. He, and they, genuinely feared their trade would be shut out of the Pacific. And Gladstone's bondage on the Nile left London with no room for manoeuvring in other semi-colonial areas where the trade-stores of Germany glared across lesser rivers or beaches at Britain's.12 On the broader issues, Thurston was not alone in walking through Downing Street as 'an indignant protestor at the extravagant demands of the German Government and against the weak con­cessions of our own'.13

11 Thurston to Chesson, 21 January 1885, RH BE MSS S18 C149/30.
12 See, for instance, Ampthill to Granville, 15 March, 13 April and 21 April (cable) 1844,PRO30/29/178; and, on the general issue, see Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, Africa and the Victorians (London, 1961).
13 Thurston to Chesson, 'Saturday', RH BE MSS S18 C149/32.
He was not to be British commissioner, it turned out, but was to advise. His advice was to fight. He was cynical about Colonial Office assurances that, if any monetary award were made, then at least Fiji would not be called on to pay:

"...I know differently. Parliament would not vote the money required - especially at this juncture. And finally the land of the wretched natives will, in some form or another, have to pay any bill.

The native who trusted in our honour and strength will be sold by a Liberal Govt. - for political motives that will bear opposite results to those anticipated."  

The sum of £10,620 which the commissioners agreed the Germans should get was added to Fiji's deficit. It took him years to have it removed.

Still, he was back in England for the first time in thirty years. He was a positive little man, who startled some of the Colonial Office clerks with his cheerful willingness to string up colonial newspaper editors, say, while entertaining other officials with stories; like an American naval captain had told him years before: 'For American Consul, read "scoundrel" - wherever found'. He had a strong sense of home-coming and proposed to enjoy himself. The climate was frightful, the opportunities to offset years of exile immense. He could pay his long-projected visit to Kew, recipient of so many plants of his collecting. He could run down to Oxford, lunch with the Australian Agents-General. The Agents might help him become Administrator of British New Guinea. And he helped his Oxford host, Professor Moseley, to get the nautilus he wanted. Thurston thought he could procure one from the gonedau, hereditary fishermen who 'know everything that crawls on the face of the sea or in the depths beneath (within soundings understood)'. It took years, but he got a specimen in the end. He was invited to Lord Rosebery's to meet the Prince of Wales - in the room where Mr Gladstone had lately revealed to Count Herbert Bismarck his perfect willingness to trade ground in small colonial

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14 Idem.

15 The correspondence is printed: '1906: Legislative Council: Fiji: Council Paper, No. 20: Imperial Loan...'. 
controversies for Egyptian sand. And he sat in the House of Commons to hear Gladstone trounced over the death of General Gordon.16

In more relaxed mood, he spent weekends with Sir Arthur Gordon's relations, and at last made the acquaintance of his own cousins at Thornbury and at Awbridge House in Hampshire, where the Thornbury branch had married. He found widows whose sons were soldiers, military doctors, colonial civil servants in Burma, all ready to welcome a picturesque new relative with a fund of stories. His holiday meant breakfast with Chesson too one Sunday morning, and a walk afterwards to Chelsea Old Church for the service – a duty which he only faintly hinted was an ordeal, with the remark that his feet got very cold while his host and he were talking afterwards with the vicar.17

His continued official business gave him added consequence. He was appointed to negotiate with Dr Krauel, Imperial German Consul-General at Sydney, on the future political relations of Britain and Germany in the Pacific. Germany had initiated these discussions and again Britain had seen no option but to agree. While he waited for Krauel, he had more White Books to show that his opponent was likely to adopt a shrill tone of jealousy toward British commerce in the South Seas: 'a jealousy which...certainly finds no reciprocal feeling in the breasts of British officials or British traders'. They accepted German merchants as equal competitors. Over 4000 Germans had emigrated to Australia. In Fiji the main contractor for 1885 was a German.18

The assumption was that, having pioneered the Pacific trade, Germans were now threatened with extinction by British interlopers from Australasia. In Rotuma, they said, German traders had been in commercial control until, on British annexation in 1880, the voyage there became uneconomic because

16 Thurston's letters to Aborigines' Protection Society and to Kew, passim; Gladstone to Granville, 5 March 1885, Political correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville 1876-1886, ed. Agatha Ramm (Oxford, 1962), II, 342.
17 Thurston's letters to Eliza Morton, passim; and to Chesson, 17 January 1885, RH BE MSS S18 C149/29.
18 F.O. to C.O., 11 September 1884, CO225/17; Minutes with C.O. to F.O., 12 March 1885, CO225/19; Thurston's memo. encl. Thurston to C.O., 6 May 1885, COCP Australian, No. III.
Suva was made the port of entry. Prior in time to Austral­asia's, German trade even now remained pre-eminent in bulk, claimed Krauel; for although most of the Pacific's trade flowed through Australasian ports, 70 per cent of their South Seas exports were of European origin while the bulk of their Island imports were also transhipped for Europe. These col­onies could not therefore claim a political supremacy on the ground that they already possessed a commercial supremacy — but they would make good their political claim unless the German Empire intervened. Krauel's Apia counterpart, Dr Stuebel, Imperial German Consul-General for the South Seas, was similarly pressing for political intervention. The time had come for a final decision as to whether or not the Empire should let the wind be taken from its traders' sails; if not, it must do all that Germans abroad were entitled to expect in the way of subsidies, gun-boats and strategic placing of missionaries.19

German xenophobia struck Thurston as about as funny as colonial jingoism. Stuebel declared that the fairness of the D.H.P.G.'s labour recruiting in Melanesia for Samoa was assured by the quality of the men employed in the ships — against none of which, totally unsupervised at sea as they were, had ever been proved any of the excesses so often committed by Queensland vessels, for all their government agents. He was protesting too much, Thurston thought. The diplomat's use of the word 'unoccupied' for Islands teeming with people was funny too. He sent Chesson naval reports along with an independent memorial by the Russian ethnologist Baron Miklouho Maclay, 'which will serve to shew the nature of "amicable relations" which German authority supposes to exist between its subjects in the Pacific and the owners of the "unoccupied" places therein'. Kidnapping ashore and canoe-smashing afloat were the mode with D.H.P.G. ships off New Britain and New Ireland which, like most South Sea Islands, were very far from being 'unoccupied'.20

Thurston's old acquaintance from Ba 'Colonel' James T. Proctor, ex-Confederate officer and noted nigger-catcher, sometimes served as a D.H.P.G. recruiting agent in the New Hebrides.21 The proposal to establish a labour depot there

19 Ibid.
20 Thurston to Chesson, 13 January 1885, RH MSS BE S18 C149/28; and to C.O., 22 May 1884, CO83/37.
21 Fragments of Empire, 140.
for the D.H.P.G. was the West African barracoon under a new name. Fiji recruiting vessels had picked up Gilbertese who, due for return from the firm's Samoa plantations, had been marooned on Malekula for the benefit of local planters and in time, no doubt, would find themselves back in Samoa.22

As Thurston had already commented from the South Seas - 'When civilized men of the class usually found adventuring among barbarians are free from the control of their national authority, and the circumstances of the moment permit them to exercise their own discretion..., there is very little to choose between one man and another', whatever their nationality.23 What he described elsewhere as the evils of the labour trade were not finished when the recruits became plantation labour subject to consular inspection. From Apia his Deputy Commissioner was reporting that the lash was much in use upon the D.H.P.G.'s plantations.24

'Holier than thou', ran the German refrain; but the German Consulate in Samoa showed no independence between employer and employed when its magisterial jurisdiction came into play. In his own Islands, Thurston often saw a lack of consideration for black labourers 'even upon the part of men who would be deeply wounded if a doubt were expressed as to their humanity'.25 Again that human characteristic knew no national boundaries. In Fiji, though, employers could be fined, and were. Open apostles of the lash never could get Nasova to recognize the disciplinary rights a planter should possess over his hired chattels. In Samoa, on the contrary, all was strained for the employer's benefit. A labourer was not often in the right.

As the tone of these White Books was revealing, so their facts were sometimes strangely presented, their conclusions curious. Rotuma's trade had never been monopolised by Germans. In the Pacific generally, traders from Australia and New Zealand had been at work before Germans. Even now the bulk of imports were British-manufactured. Into Samoa itself only 23 per cent of imports were German-made. To

22 FCSO 82/1807.
23 Thurston to C.O., 22 May 1884, CO83/37.
24 See Churchward's reports for 1883-4, WPHC: Samoa, Consul to Consul-General.
25 Thurston to C.O., 11 April 1884, CO83/36.
fill up with copra for the home voyage, German vessels often had to go on to Fiji. This being admitted by the Germans, Thurston pointed out, it would follow from Krauel's own assumptions that the bulk of Samoa's trade was not German at all - for according to Krauel, all Australasian trade was European even though the Sydney or Auckland merchant took his profit on the calicoes he sent to Tonga and the copra he shipped out.26

While Egypt was the centre of attention, the South Seas were nowhere. Still, he hoped to preserve some High Commis-
sion principles. While the Colonial Office was helping to prepare his instruction for the Anglo-German Commission and was wondering whether France should be invited to participate in a Commission which now promised to partition the Pacific, he planned to preserve as much of the Western Pacific as he could from the undivided attention of any single European power.27 In agreement with France, and America too, preferably, he wanted neutrality for the New Hebrides, Gilbert, Ellice, Marshall and Caroline Islands, as well as Samoa and Tonga. He envisaged an international commission to maintain order among nationals of the signatory powers; the recent Congo Settlement might provide a model. He was too ambitious for the Colonial Office - 'we do not wish to establish a state in the South Seas, or give it a constitution'. The instruc-
tions he received restricted him to discussion of straight-
forward issues between Britain and Germany; he began on 30
March, and sent in his report on 28 April.28

Privately he had spoken of his longing to 'engage the enemy at close quarters', his confidence that he could 'crumple him up'.29 But he was actually at what he liked to call his most 'bland and childlike' in these negotiations - with good effect in the German Chancellory, where he seemed a man of unusual perception and worth. He did not prevaricate about German preponderance where it existed. This made him the favoured British South Seas expert with the Reichschancellor - until, one day in Washington in July 1887, Count Herbert Bismarck learned that the then Sir John actually regarded

26 Encl. Thurston to C.O., 6 May 1885, COCP Australian, No.III.
27 Thurston to Kew, 16 February 1885, Kew Letters; Minutes on C.O. to F.O., 12 March 1885, CO225/19.
28 Ibid.; COCP Australian No. 113.
29 Thurston to Kew, 16 February 1885, Kew Letters.
Germany as the crudest coloniser of the modern world. Until that moment, Germany had found it preferable by far to negotiate with this evident expert than with second-rate subalterns, as Count Herbert called them, from the British Departments of State.  

And so that twenty years' involvement with the Pacific which he rarely omitted to refer to, lent him international authority. Sahl was made to remember it also. Thurston used local history to talk him out of making a *de jure* claim to foreshore. With Krauel Thurston could not operate so directly, but he still achieved some success. He wanted the High Commission's prohibition on the sale of arms, ammunition and alcohol to Islanders made more effective through a similar prohibition by the German Empire on its own nationals. These staples of the Islands trade were 'solvents under which Native life disappears and Native lands are made to change ownership'. And he wanted a German authority equivalent to the High Commission. The powers possessed by trading consuls were no parallel. 'I insist that if Germany touches these remote places at all she should establish Courts of competent jurisdiction and keep her own subjects in order', he told Chesson. 'Even then I fear the natives would be in bad case'. He wanted Tonga left to find what peace it might under Tupou and Baker, racked though the Kingdom now was by the recent declaration of an independent Free Church. And his views on the future of Samoa surprised Krauel agreeably.

He thought it pointless to continue an independent government when international treaties made it impossible for Samoans to exercise sovereignty, or even raise a revenue:

Up to the present moment the intervention of the three Governments and of their respective subjects

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30 See Krauel's reports to Bismarck of April 1885, R.Kol.A. 2835, and report from Washington December 1887, ibid., 3019; Herbert Bismarck quoted by de Rothschild, 22 April 1885, PRO 30/29/152.

31 Thurston to C.O., 16 April 1885, CO83/42; FCS093/824.


33 Thurston to Chesson, 13 January 1885, RH BE MSS S18 C149/29.

34 Thurston to Granville, 29 April 1885, COCP Australian, No.113.
in Samoan affairs has not been productive of happy results to the people principally concerned, viz., the Samoans.

In their original state it is probable that one of the two parties dividing Samoa would have conquered the other, and that after a struggle, with its attendant loss of life, permanent tranquillity might have been attained.

But the effect of foreign intervention - too little for control, and too much if control was not aimed at - has been to keep the dividing forces in equipoise. Since the execution of the Treaties..., feuds, 'rebellions' and wars have been as rife as before, native society has been in a state of disorganization. Considerable loss of life has occurred, and the unfortunate Samoans have bartered away large areas of their lands in exchange for rifles, powder, and bullets wherewith to slay each other.35

Recently Stuebel, warship-backed, had forced a German-dominated Advisory Council on King Malietoa Laupepa. It were better that German preponderance in Samoa should be acknowledged and Germany allowed to govern under mandate from the other treaty powers, with Samoa's independence guaranteed.36

He put this to Krauel - and found it as eagerly accepted in that quarter as it was rejected by the Colonial Office. Thurston was off the rails, said Herbert;37 such a proposal could never be acceptable to New Zealand. The New Zealand Premier, Robert Stout, was cabling for permission to annex Samoa, Tonga and the Cook Islands. Malietoa was writing to Grey; and the latter's supposed emissary to Samoa, John Lundon, was brandishing a 'bill' of the Samoan 'parliament' which, by echoing the Annexation and Confederation Bill, claimed to be a principal step towards making Samoa part of New Zealand. It was all sound and fury to Thurston. Its only likely effect, he foresaw, was to provoke the German Consul-General at Apia into action even more high-handed than he had yet ventured.

35 Idem.
36 Idem.
37 F.O. Minute 23 April 1885, PRO 30/29/152.
Thurston had his own irons to heat. Having charmed Krauel by his attitude on Samoa, he argued that land purchases should not be recognized in Islands under no protection; and he brought Germany into line with the High Commission's policy of limiting further European settlement in the Western Pacific. Krauel's agreement on this point was a particular victory. It was the Sydney Conference's acceptance of High Commission policy on settlement which had helped to make the Germans feel insecure. A man like Theodore Weber, general manager of the D.H.P.G. at Apia and a major land purchaser for the firm, believed existing German land titles were aimed at by jealous Australasia. On the other hand, it was far from clear what Islands would long remain outside the protection of a European power. Thurston had been obliged to accept the German demand for demarcation of spheres of influence, within which the declaration of protectorates was the next logical step. He had accepted the enumeration of German trading stations in the Caroline and Marshall Islands as grounds for putting them in the German sphere; but holding on to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands for Britain on similar grounds, he had tried to deflect Krauel's proposal to divide the Solomons. Thurston wanted them neutral. He had no hand in the later negotiations which ended in the Solomon Islands' being divided on Germany's insistence.38

Meantime, he had been busy with Fiji too. Colonial Office and Aborigines Protection Society alike needed reassurance. An uneasy pride about Fiji had developed in Downing Street. It was expressed especially by the principal clerk, F.W. Fuller, henceforth one of Thurston's private correspondents and his strong supporter. Fuller recognized what Fiji was about. 'Law in Fiji knows no difference between blacks and whites', he chided a colleague.39 Fuller was a stone wall against the continued direct assaults of Parr and his circuitous attempts to use credulous Members of Parliament.

By June 1886 Parr was back in England, a ruined man, having wasted ten years of his life and lost £10,000. The colonial government was responsible,40 so he said for the next twenty-odd years in letters from Lincoln's Inn Fields,

38 Encls Thurston to Granville, 29 April 1885, COCP Australian No. 113.
39 CO234/43, minute on Times extract, 10 August 1883.
40 Parr to C.O., 1 January 1887, CO83/47.
the Carlton Club and the London wine merchants for whom he worked. At first, all he asked was that justice be done him in the shape of a compensatory grant from the very extensive Crown lands which he knew government had at its disposal (there were virtually none); and by hard lying about his losses on the Great Amalgam Plantation (for which government had already compensated him, insofar as they resulted from its attempts to stamp out the coffee disease there) he only narrowly failed to get support.41

He wanted revenge too - especially on Thurston, for whom he had imbibed all the hatred of old settlers. He could not have resented Thurston more if he had personally run at the Battle of Nasova. In Levuka hotels and his house above the decaying old port, he had learned the view of Thurston the Judas. As his own life became more embittered, he developed one of those all-consuming obsessions which come so easily to white men half-stranded in the tropics. He would bring this Judas to his thorn tree, though it were a life-time's task. In January 1885 he was seeking to lay snares through James Lowther, M.P., who had a contempt for 'negrophilists'.42 Parr was an enemy worth taking seriously. Not every recipient of his letters could be expected to know or care that his philo-Fijianism was fraudulent.

'Slavery' remained Parr's cry - that slavery which consisted in a Fijian's working anywhere but on a European's plantation. His plausibility was equalled by that of other sufferers in Fiji whose complaints trickled into the British press and Colonial Office: like Savusavu settlers, the brothers Gordon, who published lies in The Times. Henry Gordon (whose wife Thurston good-humouredly deprived of her natural right to shoot any black intruder in her bedroom)43 was introduced to the Colonial Office in April 1885. Chiefs ruled all, for chiefly benefit alone, he said. When Thurston arrived, some members of the Colonial Office had accepted the settler viewpoint.44

M.P.'s too were responding to Parr's bombardment. And though Fuller advised that, for instance, George Anderson M.P.41 Idem, 8 June 1886, CO83/44. 42 Parr to Lowther, 16 January 1885, CO83/41. 43 Thurston to Henry Gordon, n.d., FCSO 90/961. 44 Minutes of April 1885 on des Voeux to C.O., 10 January 1885, CO83/40.
should be ignored, as wholly given to the planting interest, the gullible Mr Anderson could quote to a delighted Parr letters from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Evelyn Ashley, who indicated that he too believed the native tax system needed revision. Fuller continued to hold out in Thurstonian terms: all hope of avoiding bloodshed was founded on maintaining Fijian autonomy: colonists in New Zealand should have realized this too. His colleagues were more influenced by the settlers. R.G.W. Herbert, Permanent Under-Secretary, most influential of all, resigned himself to appointing an independent commission into the whole native policy. Chiefly powers must be clipped, Herbert supposed, after Henry Gordon had been in; the best model for the necessary new departure in Fiji was the Java system, which Herbert took to involve chiefs' being put under the close control of white magistrates. To Ashley it was clear that commoners and their would-be European employers were alike oppressed by restrictive labour laws. He told Anderson that Thurston's imminent arrival in England would enable the Colonial Office to go into the matter.

In fact, Thurston seems not to have been much consulted directly. Talk of a commission was still continuing in the Colonial Office when he left England in May 1885. That it came to nothing at this point was probably due to the indolent scepticism of Lord Derby, then Secretary of State, who privately felt blacks must inevitably wither and die with the advent of whites - but was in no hurry to assist the process, nor indeed inclined actively to arrest it. Nonetheless, Thurston exerted himself to squash talk of an enquiry. The Aborigines Protection Society had its ear to the wrong ground in Fiji. In December 1884, Chesson had written to The Times asking for a commission, with the brothers Gordon as his informants. Having re-educated Chesson, Thurston set about opening the eyes of the Society at large, as well as The Times, to the fact that all agitation derived from 'the popular, or ultra white, view of everything', from 'that feeling of contempt and dislike which unfortunately has distinguished other [white] communities similarly situated'.

45 Minutes in CO83/39 42 and 44; idem, CO209/244 and 245.
46 Minute on des Voeux to C.O., 10 January 1885, CO83/40.
47 Derby to Gordon, 4 December 1883, BM Add MSS 49201.
48 Thurston to Chesson, 24 April 1884, RH BE MSS S18 C149/27.
He pressed Chesson to have him questioned by a deputation from the Aborigines Protection Society. For an hour they heard him speak on the impossibility of attaining perfection in human affairs, even in a Crown Colony. Fiji was not perfect, then; but on Parr's own evidence the government had dismissed Ratu Vuki when it found him rapacious; and it could hardly be necessary to say that, when government's object has been the preservation and general welfare of the large and weak majority of the population of the Colony, much misapprehension and irritation has declared itself in certain of the individuals comprised in the small but active and powerful minority...

Whether officers directly responsible to the Crown, or private gentlemen the chief anxiety of whose life is admittedly to increase the number of their native labourers, are the best fitted to deal justly and wisely with the native, and to know what is best for him, is a question upon which your Society will doubtless form its own opinion: But recognising as I do the great value of the Society which, as you are aware, the Colonial Government has no means of making public.49

He still hankered after his own newspaper. In its absence a Blue Book might help to silence critics, or at least expose their motives. Correspondence relating to the Native Population of Fiji was intended to do this.50 Among its selection of papers was the egregious Mr Anderson's complaint that des Voeux had been high-handed in the Legislative Council over the 1883 Labour Ordinance, and Thurston's reply: a counterproposal by the Bill's leading opponent, Leefe, would have tended 'to destroy the Fijian as a member of his family and tribe, and to degrade him into a helot for the benefit of the proprietors...regarding the Native as a mere means to an end'. The Blue Book showed Thurston disposing of Parr's standard allegation that Fijians were meagrely living on bananas while their yams went as taxes. Here he was answering an assertion that the Moturiki people had lost

49 Idem, 16 March 1885, ibid., Cl49/31.
50 GBPP 1884-5, Vol. 53 [C.4434].
even their bananas. They had certainly paid tax arrears in bananas, at his suggestion; one cargo had met their obligation a second had been sold for them at ninepence a bunch more than they would have got from traders. Even the frequent bankruptcies of Islands traders could not convince him they were not second cousins to Long John Silver.

In the Blue Book again, Wesleyan missionaries were held up for public appraisal. Thurston was shown asking the Qose Levu for details of the hardships he alleged resulted from the tax-system, and receiving evasive answers. Some referred to discussion at the Bosevakaturaga which of course Langham had not attended. His shifty unreliability and his malice were relentlessly ridiculed.

It was all strong stuff. The Blue Book was taken hard by the brothers Hennings, named for sharp practice just at the moment their trading empire was sinking again. Langham was even more provoked. Biting his lip, he bottled up his resentment to strike back at leisure to more bitter effect.

When Thurston left for Fiji in May 1885 to be Administrator after des Voeux had left suddenly on final sick-leave, the Blue Book was still at press. And Thurston was high in favour with the white community as result of a rumour that he had addressed the Royal Colonial Institute on the need to incorporate Fiji with New Zealand - 'the reading of an imaginary paper by me, at an imaginary meeting'.51 Suva and Levuka resounded to public meetings in support. Saul was become Paul, European rejoicing ran. If the most important man in the Colony had undergone this healthy conversion, then whites and downtrodden Fijians alike could be certain the long long night was over.52

51 Minute on McConnell to Col. Sec., 10 January 1887, FCSO 87/68.
52 Suva Times, 16 April 1885.
'My little Kingdom is pretty wide'

'Nothing but rain here', Thurston wrote from Government House on his return in August after ten relaxed weeks on the journey back, 'but notwithstanding heavy tropical downpour all the principal people came off to welcome me and a greater number still came up to the swearing in.' If they had studied to flatter him, they could not have been more à propos - probably they had. 'Will they not pitch into me as soon as I may be compelled to differ with them as to what for instance "Fair play" is to mean!'

He stretched himself pleasurably. 'My little Kingdom is pretty wide, equal in fact to all the British West Indies put together including Trinidad and Jamaica.' And he had an empire, the Western Pacific Islands at large. Warship commanders brought in their reports of British traders fined for arms selling in the Gilbert and Ellice Groups, planters' inability to compete with the unhampered French in the New Hebrides and traders killed for their skulls in the Solomon Islands. His kingdom was in a commercial crisis. 'Things are awfully bad here - Bankruptcy rampant - every officer wanting promotion and a rise of salary. All classes looking to me for instanter impossibilities. I am not going to have a bed of roses.'

These impossibilities did not seriously include the publicly-touted idea of incorporation with New Zealand. Private correspondence supported his view that no one could really see advantage in becoming attached to New Zealand's national debt. And so he could watch the New Zealand end

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1 Thurston to Eliza Morton, 7 August 1885, Perrins Papers.
2 Thurston to Chesson, 19 August 1885, RH BE MSS S18 Cl49/37.
3 Thurston to Eliza Morton, 7 August 1885, Perrins Papers.
4 Idem.
5 Kraus to William Hennings, 25 April 1885, Hennings Papers; Thurston to Jervois, 19 October 1885, Governor's Letterbook.
of the business with equanimity as well as amusement. When Leefe, Knox and the others made their approach to Wellington after failing to get entry to the Sydney Intercolonial Conference, New Zealand had solemnly appointed a parliamentary committee to look into whites' grievances in Fiji. It was rather more irritating, though not surprising, when the committee of Grey, F.J. Moss and that irrepressible puffer of bubbles Sir Julius Vogel, cordially sympathized with Fiji settlers' desire to obtain a more considerate government.6

Their report was badly timed, though. Just before it came into the Colonial Office, the Secretary of State received a Maori petition pleading for observance of the Treaty of Waitangi - the much-broken equivalent of Fiji's Deed of Cession. The Maori sought the right to legislate for themselves in the King Country, they wished to appoint their own judges to the Land Court, and they wanted back lands already taken. Rejecting the assimilationist assumptions of the Pakeha, they wanted autonomies possessed by Fijians. The moral was not lost on Downing Street. Their idea of a commission to inquire into black tyranny over black in Fiji slept, while they looked around for a new Governor.7

Thurston thought it should be he. He had been under scrutiny for the Governorship as he swung through Downing Street corridors with the short man's taut assurance; and he threw away what he most wanted because it was not in him to dissimulate. He was alarmingly unconventional to the clerks. He was asked why the Armed Native Constabulary had been cut back to seventy-five Fijians - no force with which to keep down a sizeable black population. He replied that he would abolish the A.N.C. outright. Force of personality and moral suasion would keep the peace - his personality, as in the Lomaiviti affair, the Colonial Office gathered.8 He had not reported that business until asked, but was then most willing to show how much he enjoyed his ability to play Fijian politics. He overplayed his feeling that it would be really quite remarkably difficult for the Colony to get along without him. He was told informally that convention precluded the appointment of a former settler as Governor of his own colony. He

6 Encls Jervois to C.O., 12 September 1885, COCP Australian, No. 112a.
7 CO209/244-5, esp. Fuller's minute 25 May 1885 on Jervois to C.O., 11 April 1885.
8 Fiddes's minute 20 February 1885, C083/38.
accepted this, only asking that he should be borne in mind for a governorship elsewhere and be nominated Lieutenant-Governor of Fiji — a reasonable consolation, it was agreed.9

Meanwhile, he added another seventeen months to the thirty-nine during which he had already ruled colonial Fiji. Curious things had happened to friends in his absence. There was an apologetic letter from William Hennings about Ratu Lala's debts.10 Perhaps Ratu Lala felt ashamed to come directly to his foster-father — or perhaps storekeeper Hennings was pressing and the young man had referred him to his protector. In an unusual accession of energy Sir William des Voeux had suspended Ratu Lala, stripped him of his plantations and left him their liabilities.

Ratu Lala's plantations meant near-slavery for the Cakaudrove people he engaged as labourers, des Voeux had felt;11 he could not sleep for thinking of it. After he left, Mr Administrator MacGregor, reinstating the Roko, had gravely impressed on Cakaudrove provincial council the necessity of adhering to the customs and manners of their race until they were fully prepared for change.12 An unduly static view, Thurston thought. He could see no reason to stop a chief planting for the market, provided he was subject to the same obligations and supervision as white planters.13 His foster-son's example was more forward-looking than the conduct for which he had to rebuke Ratu Timoci Tavanavanua hard on his return. Ratu Timoci had been levying in a manner calculated to raise questions in the Commons about Fijian chiefs' continuance in the ways of old Fiji. True, Thurston had discouraged Timoci from starting plantations in Lala's fashion, perhaps because it would have been difficult for a Bauan to find land. Instead Thurston had appointed him to look after the Bau cane plantations. Then Timoci had fallen

9 Idem, Herbert's 28 July 1886 for Granville, CO323/66; Granville's note for Queen, 31 July 1886, ibid.; Thurston to Holland, 20 March 1887, C083/45.
10 Thurston to Hennings, 7 October 1885, Hennings Papers.
11 des Voeux to C.O., 24 December 1884 (Confidential), CO83/38; report by Blyth and Ross, 28 July 1884, Government House Miscellaneous Papers; idem, minutes October 1884; FCSO 84/2163; Provincial Department Letter-books 1883-4.
12 MacGregor to C.O., 7 July 1885, C083/41.
13 Thurston to William Hennings, 7 October 1885, Hennings Papers.
ill and, recovering, had sought more predatory means of living like a chief. As Thurston put it to Ratu Epeli Nailatikau asking him to intervene with Ratu Timoci:

He thinks of all the intentions of his Father the late Vuni Valu that were unfulfilled at the time of his death and then he informs one man -

My father intended to visit you but he died I am now going to fulfill my fathers intention.

Then in time he goes to some place presents a whales tooth and a canoe that he has begged somewhere else and carries away with him a lot of property.

The name of this action is clear to the Governt of the Queen. Its names are Mischief and Robbery.

Then he remembers that his father was going to keep pigs somewhere and he says to the people of a town - My father intended that you should keep and feed pigs for him, he is dead and now you must keep my pigs -

The consequence is that the town of the people is unclean and their planting land near the town lies idle because of Ratu Timothy's pigs -

The names of these things are mischief and oppression. I desire that you as Roko Tui Tailevu and head of your family will consider these things without delay and inform me whether you can put an end to them.

These acts are not hidden as you know. The smallest thing done here is known all over the world.

If you can end these things it will be well for you know that it is my desire that everything shall run smoothly and that the good customs of the land may be maintained -

But the bad customs it is my duty to suppress and if Ratu Timoci will not pay respect to my commands then I shall give orders that complaints against him shall be taken to the Supreme Court...
I shall await your answer to this letter and in the meantime you will see that Ratu Timoci does not visit any part of Vanua Levu.

Let me also know clearly whether Ratu Timoci will in future follow his proper *lesi* so that I may know what to order in respect of the salary he now draws.

Your friend...

Ratu Timoci was incorrigible. He sent the Bau schooner *Lurline* to levy a cargo of bananas from Navua for sale to the merchants, and was suspended. His behaviour was typically the way of a chief of the old school footloose in the paths of the new. In the special, virtually landless, circumstances of Bau, Ratu Timoci's position was particularly difficult.

Ratu Lala had advantages which Thurston did not see he should be deprived of. He had direct rights in land. Let the white colonial establishment tell itself that no precedent existed at custom for a chief to assert exclusive rights in tracts of land even if his father had planted coconuts there. Let Ratu Lala's own Fijian peers hint at favouritism. If Blyth did not know that Ratu Golea's tree-planting gave a strong claim at custom, he knew less than he should as Native Commissioner. If custom could not be developed, so much the worse for custom. Thurston put Ratu Lala back in possession of his plantations — and drew free breath for the first time since Cession.

At last he was his own master again, for however short a time. He could get away from his office. He spent part of November 1885 on a walk across Viti Levu from Nadroga to Tavua. He recalled his Sigatoka expedition of twenty years before as he went upriver, pausing to lecture Ratu Luke Nakulinikoro, the Roko Tui Nadroga, on the need to seek

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14 Thurston to Ratu Epeli Nailatikau [October 1885], FCSO Bundle 'Administrator 1885'.

15 Ratu Timoci to Blyth, 10 January 1887, FCSO 87/23.

16 Thurston's on Blyth's memo. 5 October 1885, FCSO 85/2609; FCSO 86/206; Minute for Blyth, 29 January 1886, Letterbook, with Blyth's answer 25 February 1886 at FCSO 86/434 and Thurston's reply, n.d., Government House Miscellaneous Papers.
permission from the Commissioner for Colo East before levying upon the hill people - his people, Ratu Luke liked to believe, in consequence of his services in the Little War. "No people exceed the Fijians in applying with full force the maxim "The Spoils to the Victors", Thurston told the Colonial Office. His report on this pleasurable march was thought there so full of picturesque detail that the Queen would perhaps enjoy it. MacGregor found it all too self-gratifying.17

Thurston spread himself. How greatly Fijian life had changed in twenty years, and how much to the comfort of the people! There were two hundred school-children to be examined at Nasigatoka, most of them 'bright, and, all things considered, well able to read, write, and do a few sums in simple arithmetic'. In Colo East Wesleyan teachers were marshalling their classes where he recalled an embattled people in 1865. They seemed more vital now. He luxuriated in autobiography as he came to Nabutautau, near where the Reverend Thomas Baker was killed. The aged warrior Nadrika reminisced about the Bauan punitive expedition which Acting Consul Thurston had insisted on Ratu Cakobau's undertaking. It had gone badly, Nadrika contentedly recalled, but he was anxious to be polite; 'with much amusement', Thurston received 'the assurances of the now garrulous old brave, that while he had shot at all the Bau Chiefs, among whom I stood during an attack upon a certain town, he had never so much as aimed at me, feeling that before he died I was to become his Chief'.18

He pressed on to the mountain Tamanivi, reflecting how far chiefly power was reduced wherever a mission teacher lived in a village. He talked with old Buli Nadrau to whom, like the Bauans, Thurston owed his life for his support in the 1868 campaign. The mountain and its flora occupied his attention now. 'According to Buli Nadrau, no one had ever been on the top of Tamanivi, for, as he put it, "Acava na kena yaga" - "What would have been the use?"'19 Thurston drank claret on the top, christened Tamanivi 'Mount Victoria', and added to his fern collection. Next year he appeared in the Journal of Botany as discoverer of five new ferns. 'If I could only

17. Thurston to C.O., 11 January 1886, G BPP 1887 Vol. 58 [C.5039], and C.O. minutes on idem, CO83/43; MacGregor to Gordon, 23 July 1886, BM Add MSS 49203, and to Wright, 15 August 1887, FM File 44 Doc. 96A.
stay in the Mountains - loitering along the hill-tracks no
doubt I should find many interesting [things] but my official
work presses me so that my marches are always forced.'

His passion for botany, and his grand air, invited sour
comments. He cared more for his plants than for men, said
MacGregor - who wanted to explore on his own account, for
fame and money. Pursuing the former at the Intercolonial
Conference next year by forging a relationship with one of
the delegates, Griffith of Queensland, MacGregor found him-
self lending Griffith money at interest after Griffith had
him made the new Administrator of British New Guinea.

That was a post Thurston had expected to get. He was under
orders to attend this conference. In sending MacGregor
he was putting undue confidence in his colleague's loyalty.
He had been considered for appointment to New Guinea on Sir
Peter Scratchley's death, until it went temporarily to the
Queensland politician John Douglas. 'I am glad that I have
not been sent to New Guinea', said Thurston, on that occasion,
'for I should hang all the skull and fern hunters I came
across.'

In Fiji, meantime, a touchstone was wanted to magic away
the steep decline in overseas earnings. That touchstone,
said public meetings and deputations, was commercial recip-
rocity with Victoria or New Zealand. A treaty with Vic-
toria had been proposed, but willing though he was to abandon
his belief in free-trade, Thurston could see no advantage in
ty ing Fiji to anywhere except New South Wales. Its £183,000
worth of Fiji imports was more than twice Victoria's and
Queensland's combined; and its own commercial policy was now
tending towards protection, so that extraordinary efforts
might be necessary to keep a vital market open. He wrote

20 Thurston to Kew, 26 October 1886, Kew Letters.
21 MacGregor to Gordon, 23 July 1886, loc.cit.
22 MacGregor to Griffith, 10 October 1904, Papers of Sir
Samuel Griffith, ML MSSS 363/6X
23 Thurston to C.O., December 1885, CO83/42, with C.O.Minutes
preferring Thurston; and idem, 15 January 1886, CO83/43.
24 Cuttings in Thurston's press-cutting book; Thurston to
Chesson 18 February 1886, RH BE MSS S18 C149/48; and see
his earlier letters to Kew expressing the same sentiments.
privately to Sir Henry Parkes, offering to come up to Sydney to discuss a system of tariffs by which Fiji might become commercially part of New South Wales.25

New Zealand's approach had come with comic overtones, as a child of Sir Julius Vogel's. He was sending Moss to propose a scheme of benefit to both colonies, Vogel wrote in March 1886. His proposals involved high tariffs against Fiji's best customer, Australia, Thurston replied. Vogel wrote back angrily that Thurston could expect from Australia no such generous terms as New Zealand offered, destined as New Zealand was to draw around her an Island confederation united by trade and customs agreements. Vogel had sent his delegates without discussion in New Zealand itself, a point of importance to Thurston, who always felt New Zealand politicians ran ahead of New Zealand opinion in their enthusiasm for the Pacific Islands. Moreover Vogel had only made this approach when he learned that the Honourable and Reverend Shirley W. Baker, Premier of Tonga, would not listen to a trade proposal unless Fiji was approached too.26

On the day he amused himself replying to Vogel, Thurston was entertaining Baker at Government House. Bayonet was wooing Kingfisher, as the Tongans called Baker. In September 1885 Thurston had re-established personal relations on a visit to Tonga. He had been enabled to attempt reconciliation by the difficulties Baker was in. Baker's head was hungered for by the Wesleyans in Australia. Since January 1885 his Free Church of Tonga had been threatening the Wesleyans. The Tongans were taking over church property and harassing the minority who persisted in allegiance to the New South Wales General Conference, personified locally by that excellent educator but bad politician J.E. Moulton. Baker's enemies extended now to the whole Wesleyan world - even to Bau. He had once found a supporter there when it was only the High Commissioner he was defying. 'Baker is a most accomplished son of his Father the Devil', Langham fumigated now. 'Surely the Lord will soon intervene and

25  CO 83/44; Thurston to Parkes, 8 February 1887, Autograph Letters of Notable Australians.

26  Encls Thurston to C.O., 10 May 1886 (confidential), C083/43; FCSO 86/818, 830, 1537.
avenge his own Elect!' 27

For Thurston any gnashing of clerical teeth, any howling in religious ecstasy - as he put it - was pretty to witness. He was not much surprised that the parsons were slow in proving their claim that property taken over by the Free Church, though paid for by the Tongan people, was legally vested in the New South Wales Conference. If anything, his opinion of Baker was improved by the attitude of his clerical enemies. Their policy, he told the Colonial Office, was to insist that every real or alleged grievance suffered by a Tongan Wesleyan was virtually an attack upon a British subject and so merited the Acting High Commissioner's intervention. 28 He was delighted to intervene - but not on this losing side.

He respected Dr Moulton as an educator. He had collected some of Moulton's Tongan translations - works of travel, history, geography, even Aesop's Fables. If the Fiji brethren had shown the same energy and imagination, how much better spent would the government's subsidy to their village schools be - and how much more successful the government's own direct attempt to educate Fijians at Yanawai Industrial School. 29 As a politician, on the other hand, Moulton had dug his own grave. He had insulted the King. Now, to protect the remnants of his flock, he was promising the Acting High Commissioner's imminent arrival in wrath aboard a warship. Thurston went in a merchantman, to give the Wesleyans no joy. They 'have hopelessly wrecked the finest Mission they ever had', he told Chesson who was being bombarded with material by the faithful. 'Things are in a bad way there as they always are when communities fall out on Church matters - but do not believe any "awful tales" you may hear or read.' 30 He saw no way the Wesleyan position could be retrieved. Moulton should go and a reasonable compromise over property be reached, the Free Church left

27 Fragments of Empire, 100-3; Langham to Worrall, n.d.[c. April 1887], MOM 295; and to Calvert, 22 November 1886, MMS.

28 Thurston to F.O., 21 January 1886, WPHC : Despatches to Secretary of State.

29 Draft report on Yanawai, c. May 1883, FCSO 83/1404; and Thurston to Gordon, 23 May 1881, BM Add MSS 49204.

30 Thurston to Chesson, 18 February 1886, KH BE MSS S18/C149/48.
to find its independent place in the Wesleyan world. He told George Brown so, as well as any other Wesleyan in ear-shot. 'But they are a stiff-necked hard hearted people whose dearest wish is to have Baker's head "on a charger".'

Baker needed an ally, and Thurston did not disdain the role. He saw Baker as 'a bold, active, illiterate man, possessing much force of character and no small share of natural ability'. Since Gordon's time, he had found no difficulty in convincing Tupou that the High Commission wanted to overthrow Tongan independence. Thurston had no such desire. As for Baker personally, he did not love the man; but he was a fact and could perhaps be influenced by one who knew from experience how hard it was to interpret between the world and the Islanders. Accordingly he threatened one of Baker's most vocal European opponents with deportation. He offered Baker mediation with the Wesleyans in return for his easing the ill-treatment accorded the Wesleyan remnant - and in return too, for his shaking off German influence. He accepted Baker's word that the eight hundred Wesleyans pathetically gathered at Nuku'alofa, would be allowed to go home. He was assured that all property leased to the Mission by the King had been restored to it; and he listened to Baker's version of the Free Church's origin. The Tongan chiefs, said Baker, were grieved over the New South Wales Conference's disinclination to permit them a voice in the appointment of ministers to Tonga; and they saw no reason why £3-£4,000 should annually leave the Kingdom to support mission work elsewhere. Much of this Thurston could accept. In return, Baker was malleable on the subject of the debased Chilean dollars - the 'iron-money' - introduced by Godeffroy's. The government itself was dependent on Godeffroy's heirs the Long Handled Firm - Deutsche-Handels und Plantagen-Gesellschaft - for overseas currency, Baker agreed; he would like the Royal Mint, through his friend Thurston's intermediacy, to strike a whole new Tongan coinage.

His private letters came steadily after this. Away in Ha'apai when Thurston called, Tupou had been offended by the assurances given by Baker, Thurston was told. The King was reluctant to see the Wesleyans dispersed to their homes,

31 Thurston to Gordon, 11 May 1887, BM Add MSS 49204.
32 Thurston to C.O., 21 January 1886 (confidential), WPHC Confidential Despatches to Secretary of State.
disloyal to himself as he considered them. And Tupou resented the use which Moulton was making of the agreement between Baker and Thurston. The apostate had backed down, Moulton was claiming; John Wesley was in a fair way of being justified. Nonetheless, Baker was slowly prevailing, he assured Thurston. Meantime, he was lengthening the Nuku'alofa wharf and hoped soon to see steamers at it.\(^{33}\)

Steamers were part of Thurston's commercial debate with Germany. They were to reconnect Tonga with Fiji, under contract with the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand. The Tongan branch-line was intended to be the first of several between Fiji and her Island neighbours. He aimed to centralise the trade of the Western Pacific in Fiji to the 'utmost possible extent'.\(^{34}\) In June 1886 when the Union Steamship Company's \emph{Suva} made her first monthly Tonga run he was proposing to cast Fiji's commercial net over Samoa too.\(^{35}\)

But Fiji must diversify her own agricultural produce as well as extend her commerce. Her small planters must produce other things besides copra. His impression was that the copra market was controlled by a few big firms in Europe who did pretty much as they pleased. They had disliked enquiries he made about erecting oil-mills in Fiji - 'and you may rest assured that it is not out of consideration for the planter of Fiji', he told planters as he inaugurated a new agricultural society.\(^{36}\) Let planters try some of the things he had been propagating. Cocoa was still confined to his own few hundred trees. Ginger should be tried, cinnamon too. If he could get an exquisite aroma from cinnamon he prepared in rare leisure hours, men seeking a livelihood could surely do better. They should try maize, arrowroot and castoroil which Australia sometimes imported free of duty. If Fiji did not already supply Australia with tropical products, the reason did not lie in Australia's fiscal policy, he argued. It was in the conservatism of Fiji planters, and their hankering after political solutions to economic problems. When

\(^{33}\) Baker's letters are in WPHC: Miscellaneous Papers relating to Tongan affairs.

\(^{34}\) Draft for Duncan, 20 March 1889, FCSO 89/640.

\(^{35}\) Thurston to Powell, 11 June 1886, Wilfred Powell Papers, RCIL.

\(^{36}\) Agricultural and Industrial Association of Fiji, Inaugural Address by the Hon. John B. Thurston, C.M.G, F.L.S.,&c.,&c. (Suva, 1887).
the Levuka Chamber of Commerce tried one final petition against the 'experiment' of a tax scheme in January 1886, he was ready with the fullest paper he had ever prepared in its defence - and, as he hoped, the last. He said point-blank on the spot what he had told the Aborigines Protection Society safely away in London, that settlers 'want the native - to make use of him for their high profit and advantage - as a means to an end - and that they shall not "possess" the native if I can prevent it'.37

Not altogether intransigent, he produced a new Labour Ordinance permitting employment of Fijians by time or task, to meet some employers' complaints about the 1883 Ordinance. He would not abolish the home districts, though. The closer Fijians remained to their villages the better. They were too well off at home to work for Europeans, unless to raise money for a communal project like a boat or church.38

The tax-system itself must stand as a whole. He found nothing attractive in petitioners' proposal that those Fijians who could raise money should pay in coin and be protected from chiefly levies in their possession of what remained. 'If the Native may pay in money or kind...it will end in his not paying at all', Thurston wrote. 'Individual payment in money is inconsistent with the state of Fijian society and there is no machinery of government for punishing defaulters excepting the gaol - which is out of the question.' Chiefs' extortion would prevail still more under a money tax. Produce was profitable to Fijians. In the ten years 1876-1885, the tax had yielded £158,644 to government and cost £17,094 to collect; in nine years to 1884, £24,368 had been refunded. Despite the petitioners' assertion to the contrary improved agricultural methods helped produce this result.39

If Fijian mortality was in question - 'a subject of anxious concern to Government' - it was à propos to mention measles, whooping cough and influenza. To allege Fijian idleness and poverty and to complain at the same time about the decline in European-owned small craft, was to ignore a new Fijian activity, at sea, in vessels licensed to carry

37Thurston to Chesson, 28 April 1886, RH BE MSS S18 Cl49/42.
38Thurston to C.O., 17 May 1886, CO83/43
39'Minute by the Acting Governor upon a Petition from the Levuka Chamber of Commerce...', Leg. Paper II of 1886, copy encl. Thurston to C.O., 15 April 1886, CO83/43; quotations are from the amended FCSO copy.
passengers. There were three totalling sixty-four tons in 1876, sixty-nine totalling 625 tons in 1885 - 'indigence in Fiji is a state of being entirely different to that known in other parts of the world, and ... idleness is productive of unusual results'. In 1884 Fijians subscribed £4,728 to the Wesleyan Mission. And if they did idle, this habit was not unobservable with Fiji's Europeans, among whom it 'may with equal reason be associated with existing commercial depression'.

Depression was not as marked as, for present purposes, the petitioners wished to believe. And they had forgotten the theory of human wants. Every country had a political economy all its own. They required a Fijian to labour on a plantation or at making some saleable article. Yet the Fijian's wants, though increasing, remained comparatively few. 'He does not regard work as the chief end of man, and the necessities of his climate and surroundings do not force him to labour'. Fijian interests were paramount:

The price of conciliation is surrender of the vital interests of the aboriginal native race, numbering some 110,000 souls, into the hands, practically speaking, of fewer than 500 Europeans. If this be acceded to by Her Majesty's Government complaints from Europeans of native wrongs, slavery, misery &c. will no longer be heard. In their place, however, murmurs will ere long arise from the Native community, and it may be expected that demands from colonists for police and military protection, though unrequired so long as the Native Policy lasted, will certainly be made under circumstances forming a mere repetition of history.

He was under more subtle pressure from the C.S.R. Co. Their markets were threatened by beet-sugar and over-production of cane. Until 1885 they made no interest on the £500,000 they had invested. In May 1886 Thurston heard

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
privately from Knox — 'Hard Knocks', the durable General Manager came to be called in Fiji — hinting that though Thurston might shuffle off his personal obligation to the millers, he could not escape the hard fact of Fiji's dependence on sugar. He must give the company a much freer hand in the management of its human and other resources; allow it to lease more land on the Rewa; and remove some of the petty restrictions on the use of the Indian labourers, many of whom had, in the company's eyes, proved so weakly or diseased on arrival that their cost was a fraud perpetrated by government. Having delayed his reply until Knox realised that he was not impressed by this indirect pressure and began thinking of turning to MacGregor — who cared about big business, got twelve per cent on his own bawbees, and died rich — Thurston did indicate the limits of his humanity where the Indian human subsidy was concerned. He provided penalties for irregular Indian attendance in the fields. There it ended, stopping short of the itaukei when he discovered what trouble Rewa leases were causing between Bau and Namata.44

He was too late there. Ratu Epeli and Ratu Marika were as much at loggerheads in the Delta as in Lomaiviti. A principal question along the Rewa river flats was what group of people had rights in which piece of potential cane-land? And, in what political relationship did they stand to Bau? As Namata represented it, Bau was claiming flats on behalf of people more subservient than the semi-independent Kai Namata. Bau was certain Namata was trying to establish rights exclusive of Bauan claims as overlord.45 Ratu Marika was probably at fault, Thurston decided; but the reaction from Bau had been so violent that he felt bound to lecture Ratu Epeli again. If chiefs of his rank broke their trust, emptying towns in fits of rage as he had done, how could their rule be maintained?46

44 Knox to Thurston, 26 April 1886, Private Letterbook; Robertson, 11 June 1886, Fiji Letterbook, and to Murray, 9 July 1886, Private Letterbook; K.L. Gillion, Fij i's Indian Migrants (Melbourne, 1962), 83-4; Thurston's minute, 9 September 1885, FCSO 85/1641.

45 FCSO 85/1641; Usaia to Ratu Marika, 16 October 1885, Government House Miscellaneous Papers; Ratu Marika's statement, 10 January 1886, ibid.; FCSO 93/3676.

46 Thurston's memo. 26 February 1887, FCSO 88/2078; Thurston to Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, January 1886, Government House Miscellaneous Papers.
Inescapably, Bau would always more naturally act *vakavanua* than by strict legal procedure. It was expected. When landowners on the river found that Ratu Marika was suborning one of their number, Taniela Mataki, they sent him prisoner to Bau for fear the Bau chiefs should think the whole community was implicated. All over Fiji, the *vakavanua* ordinance covered occasions when Native Stipendary Magistrates did what they thought was justice summarily, and as chiefs, or at the chiefs' instigation.

The result was obvious in a great political centre like Bau. Taniela Mataki had companions during his imprisonment. Epeli Degedege was one, a local preacher from Sawakasa district. His desire to marry his *turaganikoro*’s step-daughter against her family's wishes had led to his expulsion. There also were Jone Levoni and Vetaia, who elected to believe they were prisoners because they had accused their buli of living with a woman not his wife. Their record showed them to be agitators for that recurrent object in Fijian politics, the creation of a new district. And there was a certain Zephaniah, another mission teacher. He had grievously offended Buli Sawakasa and the other *Turaga* of the district. He had complained about damage done to his gardens by the Bure people from Ra who, coming to *solevu* to Buli Sawakasa, had exercised the right of travellers upon the yams and bananas in their path. Epeli was doubly offensive: they were actually coming to help his own village thank Buli Sawakasa for protection in a war; and Epeli's protest had been made by insolent letter to Buli Bure.

Some of these cases were to be publicised, with Langham's help. Like the dismissals or suspension of ruling chiefs, it looked as though they could be used to prove the native policy's failure (see below). If no worse could be alleged, Thurston thought, you could equally quote them as indication of its success. What more did critics require than, say, the dismissal of Ratu Vuki? He could answer that they desired to bridge over centuries and countless generations, during which a primitive state of society has existed, and by force to engrain thereon English ideas of the nineteenth century. The proposal, if adopted, would be an 'experiment', and an experiment attended with danger and want of good faith.

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The 'rights and privileges to which all subjects of the British Crown' are entitled, are things less susceptible of exact definition than commonly believed .... There are subjects of the Crown who prefer the rights and obligations of their family or commune to that of the individual - a social status beyond their comprehension. What... would be the value of individual rights and privileges, as understood by the Petitioners, to a Fijian whose stone axe is still lying about his house, who regards marriage between cousins on the agnatic side with horror and on the cognatic side as an obligation, whose uncles are termed fathers, and whose aunts are mothers, and who only yesterday, worshipped some even in name forgotten dead chief as his ancestral god?48

As he wrote he knew two of the gods were not dead. Naucirikaumoli and Nakausabaria had only slept since 1878. Their reawakening followed the return of Navosavakadua, released by the Bosevakaturaga of 1883 long after his fellow deportees had been allowed home. Cult activities were taken up again in Soloira; and Carew, reporting to Suva while Thurston on his way back from London was delighting the guardian of Ceylon's Peredeneya Gardens with his appreciation of the place, had urged the then Administrator, MacGregor, and Acting Colonial Secretary, Henry Anson, to suspend judgement until the master got back to the Colony.49

Carew was an alarmist to the others, but to Thurston, he was an old hand, a friend and good Fijian linguist who was likely to be right. Luveniwal, which was being practised, conferred immortality and could be the prelude to war. He let it go for the moment, but kept his ear to the ground. He was hardly out of Colo West in November 1885 than reports came of men drilling in the eastern commissionership. Their psychology, and the whole context of the Tuka cult, he was to inquire into on the spot years later, and his conclusions about its nature became scriptural (see below). Now he stayed in Suva and sent Carew and Roko Tui Ra to nip in the bud a movement which might otherwise end in bloodshed.

'There is a man in your district with whose evil conduct

48 Minute by the Acting Governor ...
49 Carew to Anson, 29 June 1885, FCSO 85/1668.
the Govt. has put up for some years but whose foolishness
and mischief must be at once stopped' - Thurston told the
Roko, Ratu Tevita Rasuraki, whose ardent Wesleyanism should
ensure his hearty co-operation, and who would appreciate the
objectives. 'That man is Bete Navosavakadua who lives at
Drau-ni-ivi and who calls himself Degei's Bete.' Let him
be arrested for trial either in Ra or Suva as Ratu Tevita
judged most prudent.50 To Carew went a stream of private
letters, as to an old companion who knew the ground. Na
Kena Vai wanted the affair ended swiftly and with economy.
If he had to send up five hundred men it would look very
like a little war. 'I also rather fear Mr Benis discretion',
he said of Adi Arieta's eldest son, young Ratu Peni Tanoa, the
Roko Tui Naitasiri, who was with Carew.

Pray keep him well in hand. Any pursuit
of men among crags and hill tops would
interfere with ordinary work and quietude
of neighbouring districts, and would 'rogo'
badly abroad.51

The prophet soon arrived in Suva under guard despatched by
Ratu Tevita with a prayer that he should never be allowed to
see Ra again, while Carew was dealing out prison sentences
and lashes to his disciples.52 Meanwhile, Thurston reflected
on the likely spread of the movement, having regard to past
political alignments in the hills. He did not think the
powerful district of Nadrau would be affected. He relied
on his friend the Buli - 'a regular old "tevoro" but he was
an ally of Gov. through all the troubles of 76 and was with
us in 73'. And Buli Tavua, in Ra, seemed wise in his
estimation of Navosavakadua. He had broken a plate, given
one of Navosavakadua's bete till evening to mend it, and
awarded thirty lashes for his failure. 'He shd have broken
the prophets head instead of his own plate.'53

50 Thurston to Ratu Tevita Rasuraki, 27 November 1885,
Governor's Letterbook.
51 Thurston to Carew, 4 December 1885, Carew Papers; rogo,
i.e. resound.
52 FCSO 85/3259; and see FCSO: Files relating to Deportation
of Natives, Case 1.
53 Thurston to Carew, 11 December 1885, Carew Papers.
Thurston sympathised with the Bauan chiefs who ordered Navosavakadua's father killed. Even so he took a cooler view than his subordinates in the hills, who dwelt apprehensively on the possible significance of a white pig which Navosavakadua had ordered fattened for the knives. However, he felt that in the long run a police post above Ra was desirable. Meantime, he thought it well to disembarrass the inland people of their firearms. And to show how relaxed the occasion was, he took his wife and their baby daughters too; the children came back 'none the worse from their trip up among the erstwhile cannibals' but in greater haste than their father had intended. While he was upriver in August 1886, the affairs of his Fiji kingdom were intruded upon by his Western Pacific empire. He was ordered to Samoa.

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54 Thurston to Eliza Morton, 20 August 1886, Perrins Papers.
Chapter 12

'Charming in its sweet simplicity'

Thurston went to Samoa in August 1886 as the British member of a tripartite Anglo-German-American commission sent to suggest how the Samoan Kingdom's affairs might be better ordered. Especially asked for by Bismarck, his appointment had readily been agreed to by the Foreign Office. He was in good standing with both sides and disenchanted with the pair of them. Few advantages had eventuated from his negotiations with Krauel; German labour vessels were still free to offer fire-arms for recruits, and did so. Now the Foreign Office was promising to be equally weak with France.

'And now the New Hebrides is to be handed over to France?' he had just written to Chesson. France was offering to cease transportation of recidivists to New Caledonia, in return for a free hand in a neighbouring group, and Britain was pressing this solution on Australasia. 'Well I can only say that men at home are cutting out some desperate & bloody work for men out here.' It was madness to suppose France would stand by her undertaking indefinitely. And he told the world so. At the beginning of June 1886 he had received a secret approach from James Service, Premier of Victoria, whose state was leading the cry against the French proposal. Thurston replied with, he thought, an equally secret expression of his own opinion but he was not greatly displeased when Service published his refutation of London. Even if Rapa were ceded by France, as New Zealand required, cession of the New Hebrides would be against Australasian interests, Thurston argued. Ending transportation was no equivalent. Already New Caledonia had a sufficiency of criminals who could be put in the New Hebrides, their produce to compete with Fiji's and their ready access to Australia a social disadvantage for the latter. Anyway, a future French government might regard the

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1 F.O. to C.O., 28 April 1886, and Malet to Rosebery enclosed, 23 April, COCP Australian, No.118.
2 Thurston to Chesson, fragment, RH BE MSS S18 C149/39a.

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pledge as an impeachment of French sovereignty.  

English newspapers were full of him, he learned from the Thurston's of Awbridge House. The Foreign Office was not much amused. 'It was bad you know and "seriously embarrassed HMG in its diplomatic arrangements with a Foreign Power"' he told his sister. 'Precisely - I intended it should do so - and it did.' He received Foreign Office papers with France's explanation that she wanted the New Hebrides as a labour reservoir for New Caledonia. He wrote back that he doubted this. He thought the group was actually wanted as a plantation colony, for convict exploitation. The evidence was that the naturalised Frenchman, John Higginson, had launched the Compagnie Caledonienne des Nouvelles-Hebrides four years previously, since which time he had been acquiring land and pressing for French annexation.

'Gladstone and Granville can go to the devil', he told his sister, 'I have written another despatch today, standing to my guns - But I doubt that the liberals! will ever forgive me.' Still, some of what he said could be construed as apology for the publication of his views. The cable sending him to Samoa may have come as a relief, little as he expected to be able to do to reverse the 'late German pranks' there.

They had been making for mordant private letter writing. 'You will I fancy agree with me that Weber manages very well', he told George Brown in March 1886 'and is leaving nothing undone to force the hand of his Government.' Theodore Weber, manager of the D.H.P.G., had been encouraging Consul-General Stuebel into action against King Malietoa Laupepa's government ever since 1883. Their methods were summary enough. Even Bismarck had been angered when, on the gossip

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3 Minute encl. Thurston to C.O., 4 June 1886 (secret and confidential), COCP Australian, No.118.
4 Thurston to Eliza Morton, 23 June 1886, Perrins Papers.
5 Thurston to C.O., 24 June 1886, COCP Australian No.118; idem, 23 June 1886 (confidential), C083/43.
6 Thurston to Eliza Morton, 23 June 1886, Perrins Papers.
7 Thurston to Brown, 7 March 1886 (confidential) George Brown Papers.
of Sir George Grey's professed emissary that he would soon bring about New Zealand annexation, Stuebel had forced Malietoa into a treaty granting a German Council of Advice and had entered a claim to land at the Samoan seat of government, Mulini'u'u Point. Even so, Stuebel had been left to go on practising what his master called 'morbua consularis' with a naval squadron to help him. Weber, his presiding genius, had mobilised Malietoa's institutional rival, Tupua Tamasese Titimea, head of Tumua. Under German protection, Tamasese was installed as rival to Malietoa. A war of attrition ended in January 1886. Malietoa was driven off Mulini'u. Hoisted elsewhere in Apia, his flag was hauled down again by men from H.I.G.M.S. Albatross. The Samoan government scribe wrote in protest to the German naval commander, Admiral Knorr - who found him impertinent, lacking in the respect due to legitimate German influence:

They broke into the house of the King, threw about at random the things contained in it in the presence of the King. We were astonished at it. It was as if it were done by some barbarous people (dark people).

The Germans were behaving after the Samoan image of Melanesian labourers. 'Had it not been for M. Weber and Dr. Stuebel our islands would now have been at peace', complained the Malietoa party; they tried to show how much common ground there really was between themselves and the suborned 'rebels':

On a certain day Selu, the secretary, explained everything to the Tumua, showed to them their wrong and their want of affection for Samoa; the more so in that they had been foremost with their groans and sighs on account of the unjust conduct of Dr Stuebel and M. Weber, whom now they rejoiced to obey. Then Manoa, Ruler of Samatau (rebel, the same man who said to Malietoa, 'It is plain that we are to be the slaves of Germany'), said to Selu, 'It is true what you say; a person belonging to my town was consigned to M. Weber's prison for six months with hard labour, and was fined 100 dollars; of this 50

8 Bismarck's comment quoted P.M. Kennedy, 'Bismarck's Imperialism: the Case of Samoa, 1880-1890', Historical Journal, XV, 2, 1972, 270.

9 Encl. Powell to F.O., 28 May 1886, COCP Australian, No. 118.
dollars was paid, but of the other 50 dollar M. Weber said to me that it should be remitted.\textsuperscript{10}

It was clear where power lay, then; but Tamasese's party had nonetheless followed it. As for the Malietoa side 'we thought it would be better to rush on death and perish at the hands of Dr Stübel, but no longer to endure it'.\textsuperscript{11} Nevertheless they had endured, in the hope that the other treaty powers would intervene.

What they endured Thurston summed up for Brown:

You know the history of Mulinuu Point - its alleged purchase by Weber from Coe (American trader) & the object of that acquisition.

Weber claims rent - complains of his Samoan Majesty's 'arrogant' and 'haughty' behaviour and failing payment of rent calls upon him to quit -

After due consideration His Majesty - elects, as the Yankees put it - to quit.

This resolve being carried out, the 'arrogant' and 'haughty' Monarch ventures to hoist his national bunting elsewhere -

On this the Consul Genl takes affront and regards it as an 'insult to the German Flag' flying in a small stockade at Mulinu'u.

Armed men land from the Gunboat Albatross - & the flag of Malietoa is pulled down -

Steube! then takes his 'view of that which is necessary' and launches a Proclamation and appropriates the neutral territory of Apia - territory neutralised by the three powers... & containing private property of all three peoples.

This act is for the purpose of showing Germany's desire for a strong native Government.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12}Thurston to Brown, 7 March 1886 (confidential), Brown Papers.
It was all a melancholy farce; the final paragraph of Stuebel's proclamation, beseeching Samoans to have confidence in Germany and Stuebel himself, was 'charming in its sweet simplicity'. You appear to be having exciting times - very much like my own old experiences', Thurston told his current Deputy Commissioner at Apia, Wilfred Powell - who had been with Brown in the New Britain business. There was 'something fearfully humorous in the perpetual fuss and worry over Samoa by three Great Powers'. Britain at any rate was ready to get out. Meantime she was pulling with Germany in everything - 'in consequence, no doubt, of important considerations in and near Europe which dwarf Samoan and most other questions in the Pacific to utter insignificance'. The Pacific was not, after all, the hub of the world. Powell had better 'continue to keep perfectly collected and not be led into any heroic act or attitude'. He might even be wise to take up gardening.

Heroism was being attempted by the American Consul who had run up the stars and strips over Malietoa's flag. He was in secret collaboration, apparently, with another of Grey's emissaries. This was the lawyer W.L.Rees, whom the despairing Samoans had appointed legal advisor. After his visit in August-September 1886, Thurston suspected he had been a party to Selu's letter of protest.

Meantime, Powell needed informal advice about cases in the Deputy Commissioner's Court. The British half-caste William Yandell was up for political forgery, but Thurston doubted whether the charge should lie. He knew Adi Arieta Kuila's ideas about the value of a signature:

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\begin{align*}
\text{In my own experience in the South Seas (even today in Fiji) I shd not hold that the signing of a name as signed by Yandell was 'forgery'...} \\
\text{It is done here every day as a matter of course - I have difficulty in persuading one woman of high rank that her son must not sign her cheques & that if she asks him to do so, and he does, the Bank will not cash...} \\
\end{align*}
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13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
15 Thurston to Powell, 21 June 1886, Wilfred Powell Papers.
16 See W.L.Rees Papers, Turnbull Library; and Thurston to C.O., 16 October 1893 (confidential). CO225/42.
16 Thurston to Powell, 21 June 1886, Powell Papers.
Then the cable ordering him to Samoa had come. He arrived late in August 1886, wishing Germans and New Zealanders alike with the devil, in the company of Gladstone and Granville. He was required to report on the causes of disorder in Samoa, and to devise a scheme for ensuring peace under Samoan autonomy. The causes were obvious, he thought, and the chances of maintaining Samoan sovereignty derisory without a change of German heart.

There was no sign of that. The German Commissioner gathered evidence to support the view that German commercial predominance must be accorded a political dimension. He would not sit with Thurston or their American colleague George Handy Bates (with whom Thurston struck up immediate friendship). 'Thus a German, Englishman or American might have been examined by Mr Travers, Mr Bates and myself - & have given three different statements', Thurston told the Foreign Office privately. In practice Travers, Consul-General at Sydney in Krauel's place, and with the same phobias, would let no one question Germans but himself.17

Their blame was clear, notwithstanding. 'They are (in Samoa) a hard and rapacious people', Thurston concluded; they had 'ridden roughshod over the natives, and as far as possible over everyone else'.18 Stuebel himself had been recalled, though only on condition the other consuls went too; but there was no difference between him and his juniors still at the Consulate. 'All nice men, but to all intents and purposes they might be Directors or shareholders in the Deutsche Handels...Co.'19

He talked with the head of the only independent German company in Samoa, H.M.Ruge. Ruge was 'burning to wind up his affairs in Samoa where he is regarded as inimical to the interests of the great German Firm to which everything must give way', Thurston told R.G.W.Herbert.20 Ruge was slighted by the Consulate and Admiral Knorr - 'or as he told me himself all innocent of the pun, they "igKnorred" him' - because he

17 Thurston to Pauncefote, 15 October 1886 (private), F058/218.
18 Idem; and to Herbert, 1 October 1886, F058/138.
19 Thurston to Pauncefote, 15 October 1886, F058/136.
20 Thurston to Herbert, 1 October 1886, F058/136.
kept influential men in Germany informed about the actual state of commerce. 'This is of course a deadly sin.' Thurston too found Samoa overrated as a commercial proposition. The Long Handled Firm naturally represented it as an established success; but he doubted whether even that firm was making much out of the place. The two main islands Upolu and Savai'i, were comparatively small and Savai'i was full of basalt, scoria and lava beds:

The Germans began there in 1857 - and have carried a free hand in everything - At the end of thirty years they can point to no one success.

Money invested I admit. But the bottom of the sea has also been the scene of heavy investments.\(^21\)

Yet the islands had appeal - 'and visitors from the bleak regions of the south go mad over them'.\(^22\) He meant the successors of the moa, about whose designs he received many German complaints. The Germans' prickliness was alternately amusing and exasperating:

They have received the most perfect assurances from H.M.G. and yet are full of fury and suspicion if a wandering pressman or Colonial Bishop on his travels writes something in derogation of what comparatively speaking are after all only paltry interests in a paltry place.\(^23\)

On the other hand, he had always felt that Grey, Vogel, Stout and company gave cause for complaint. It little calmed the Germans to find Stout cabling his Agent-General in London: 'Get Samoa annexed'. The German Embassy had seriously questioned whether Foreign Office undertakings to respect Samoan independence were not to gain time for New Zealand to intervene unilaterally. Thurston suspected that even the Codeffroy-Steinberger agreement in the 1870s had been partly prompted by Vogel's bubble of that era. He felt Stuebel's moves against Malietoa had also owed something

\(^{21}\) Idem.

\(^{22}\) Thurston to Kew, 4 November 1886, Kew Letters.

\(^{23}\) Thurston to Paunceforte, 15 October 1886, F058/218.
to New Zealand politicians' notorious anxiety to engross the Pacific in general and Samoa in particular. He said so officially. He was attacked for it by Stout and, quoting chapter and verse in return, he laid the New Zealand Premier in shreds upon the appreciative Colonial Office's carpet.24

Thurston faced what he saw as the facts in Samoa, depressing though he found them. 'Politically considered, there is no homogeneity discoverable in the Samoan race', he thought. His friend A.P. Maudslay (Deputy Commissioner at Apia before Swanston) had found Samoans docile, truthful, hospitable, lively and vivacious and courteous to the vavalagi. He agreed with all this except 'truthful' - and added that they were 'thieves by instinct and in many cases are so now by necessity', since Europeans claimed to possess title to 24,000 acres more than the whole area of Samoa. Samoans 'must either "trespass" and "pilfer", or die', as he said. And the 'idea may also obtrude itself that there has been some "pilfering" on the other side'. Independent minded lands commissioners were needed. The German claim that their deeds were valid almost by definition must be thrown out.

For Samoans, the future could only remain gloomy in the extreme, but their own political genius was largely responsible:

They are eminently lazy, consumed with mutual jealousy, and the memory of old-time feuds, given to high-sounding expressions and empty promises, fond of new faces and accessible to the influences of any plausible knave or adventurer appearing among them. 25

And they had already ceded their sovereignty in all but name. Obedient to his instructions, Thurston prepared a new constitution, with provision for rotating the Kingship between the Malietoa and Tupua title-holders. Samoan political instincts would be further met if there were two councils - the lower

24 Thurston to C.O., 23 December 1885, CO225/18; Stout's memo. 7 June 1886, encl. Jervois to C.O., 18 June 1886, CO209/246; 'Papers relating to the Islands of Samoa and Tonga', AJHRNZ 1185 I A.-4D; Thurston to C.O., 1 and 27 October 1886, CO225/22.
25 Thurston to F.O., 1 October 1886, FOCP No 5417.
one of elected district representatives, the other with King, vice-King and fifteen chiefs sitting alongside three foreign representatives. He had this constitution-making pretty much to himself. Bates — entirely new to the Pacific — felt unqualified to give an opinion, though he told his government it should certainly maintain its treaty rights in Samoa, and Travers considered the exercise futile.  

Privately, Thurston thought so too. His remedy was the most generous to Samoans that could have been devised, but he did not really see how the clock could be turned back to Steinberger's day. He followed his official report with a confidential recommendation which reflected not only his sense of reality about Samoa, but his concept of Fiji's interest in the future of islands nearer to her, Tonga. His public remedy for Samoa should not be attempted; the powers should cease pursuing the chimera of Samoan independence; the Germans should be granted their mandate to govern. He had told Travers about Australia's irritation at the loss of the northern Solomon Islands to Germany; and asked what compensation Bismarck would give for a free hand in Samoa. He found Travers willing to go along with his proposal that Tonga should be the consolation. Only the reversionary interest in Tonga was wanted, said Thurston, only the right to intervene if the Tongan monarchy collapsed. On that they had parted. This solution Thurston asked permission to put before the Secretary of State, who was delighted to have it. It accorded pretty much with Cabinet thinking and put the expert's imprimatur on the manipulation of the politicians.  

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26 Ibid.  
27 Thurston to C.O., 8 October 1886 (secret and confidential), FOCP No. 5607; Paul M. Kennedy, The Samoan Tangle (Brisbane, 1974).
Chapter 13

"In the presence of a great wrong"

Thurston was about to be eclipsed in Fiji. He was appointed Lieutenant-Governor but was to make way for Sir Charles Mitchell from Natal, who was sworn in during a thunderstorm in January 1887 while they eyed each other. The newcomer was afraid of the old hand, feeling shackled in his handling of Fijian affairs by the presence of a local Pan to his Zeus. From his side, Thurston saw a purse-conscious bachelor who seemed well-disposed towards his idiosyncratic new colony. Mitchell had spent the obligatory few days with Gordon at Colombo. Relations between Governor and Lieutenant-Governor were always uneasy, though. Mitchell was unhappy at the free hand Fijians were given. That could have made for difficulties, because the future of the native policy was in his hands.

Lord Derby's successors had received their quota from Parr about suicides, slavery, the death-rate among poor Fijians and the tax-system's responsibility for it all. Parr took up constituency work for the Conservative Party and used the slight influence he gained in pursuit of his idée fixe. His imagination increasingly infertile, his cases of oppression more stale, he still found outlets. The Saturday Review of 19 June 1886 had an article on chiefs' taking all the people's property, the planters ruined for want of labour, and the Fijian death-rate double the births in '84. To cap it all, the danger of a return to cannibalism was so great that the venerable Reverend James Calvert had gone out in a bid to prevent it.

1 See their respective letters to Gordon, Stanmore Papers.
2 Mitchell to Gordon, 9 February 1887, BM Add MSS 49241.
3 Thurston to Gordon, 8 January and 11 May 1887, BM Add MSS 49204.
4 Minutes on Parr to C.O., 26 August 1886, CO83/49; Mitchell to C.O., 29 September 1886 (confidential), ibid.
Calvert had lately been dining with Thurston, having actually come in a vain attempt to mediate with Baker. Receiving this Saturday Review by the September mail, Thurston wrote to Calvert at Bau for comment. No doubt there were imperfections, and he wanted to put them right as they came to light, but no other system would be so just to Fijians, so well in accord with settlers' true interests, or so cheap. In reply he received a letter, full of amusement at the article, which the Colonial Office thought would bear printing in government's support.

Still, Calvert's answer could have been read two ways. His host at Bau was preparing to spring a mine under Thurston's feet. The Qase Levu was on the war path. He had put on the paint, he said, over Fijians' treatment at government's hands. He wanted to show that, with government consent, chiefs exercised the power to flog or deport British subjects at will. He was not influenced by any reflection that those subjects were before everything Fijians. And he had awaited the arrival of the new Governor before attempting to use his tomahawk. A week after Thurston exchanged letters with Calvert, Langham sent out a statement; ostensibly directing it to the Aborigines Protection Society, he gave it to the press as well. 'I fancy I have stirred the folks at home & I have now sent a dose to the Colonies - and I am preparing a bolus for Mr Thurston & Co here', he told a young colleague who aspired to a similarly elegant pen. In March 1887, with Thurston out of Government House, Langham printed this 'bolus' in the Fiji Times in the form of a long postscript to his statement to Chesson.

Floggings of Wesleyans in Tonga were in the news, wrote Langham, but he could tell of more brutal ones in Fiji, Zephaniah's for one. A member and official of the Wesleyan

5 Calvert's Journal 'To Fiji & Tonga and back', 19 July 1886, MMS.
6 Encls. Thurston to C.O., 30 September 1886, GBPP 1887 Vol 58 [C.5039].
7 Langham to Worrall, 30 December 1886, MOM 295.
8 Circular letter 28 September 1886, copy at RH Brit Emp. MSS S18 C140/18.
9 Langham to Worrall, 30 December 1886, MOM 295.
Methodist Church, 'a man of respectable position, and irreproachable character, and of course a British subject', Zephaniah had suffered six strokes naked before some two thousand people with the result that he would carry 'a frightful wale' to the grave. If a planter had so beaten a man, he would have been in gaol. Thurston had known of the beating and done nothing. 'But knowing what I do of the policy of the Government here, I am not much surprised at its inaction.' In other cases, a local preacher and two men had been deported, he added. Then he sat back in the satisfaction that he had given Thurston hard nut to crack in front of the new Governor - 'one of the right sort'.

It was not difficult to crack the nuts and the missionary too. Langham had mixed a little fact with a great deal of fiction. That was, after all, his profession. Zephaniah's 'wale' was from an old burn. His 'stripes' had been administered by a local preacher with an ordained Fijian Minister standing by. Neither had thought the matter of any moment, until the Reverend Mr Small began asking about it on behalf of Langham - as to whom, Thurston told Mitchell, 'I have experienced his bitter and unrelenting hostility for very many years and look forward to its continuance with indifference'. Thurston had actually punished the Buli responsible, who had been heard to remark afterwards - with approving murmurs from the provincial council - that in the past men had been flogged with a v'ai and had not fainted.

Thurston interviewed Zephaniah again in proof of his concern. The record of the interview shows the stresses Zephaniah was under. He regretted the affair's resurrection. It was making him unpopular in his village. It was an insolent letter that I wrote to Buli Bure, and quite improper for a man of my standing to write .... Mr Langham has probably reported my case because I am a member of the Church body. He had made no complaint about Koroibuleka, who was flogged when I was, but Koroibuleka is not a Church member.

Fiji Times, 2 March 1887; encls. Aborigines Protection Society to C.O., 20 November 1886, CO83/45; Langham to Worrall, 15 March 1887, MOM 295.

The papers are at FCSO 87/540, 603, 679, 1324, 1788, 2443, 3204; and see encls. Mitchell to C.O., 2 March and 10 May 1887, CO83/45.
The deportees mentioned by Langham turned out to be Epeli Degege, Jone Levone and Vetaia - all similarly punished vakavanua for conduct disagreeable to their fellows and superiors. Though Mitchell disliked action vakavanua, Thurston readily proved to him that Langham's object was malicious while Epeli's case enabled Thurston to illustrate some of the forces at work in a village. The people involved were 'only covered with a slight veneer of Christianity and civilization'; the problem was 'to teach them to govern themselves upon entirely new lines of thought, and to pass from barbarism to civilization without... that "rude shock" which has hitherto destroyed every black race with which European Civilization has come in contact'. Epeli, like Zephaniah a teacher, had wanted to marry a woman whose relations objected, among other reasons because Epeli's cousin had seduced hers. The European Stipendiary Magistrate had found this reasoning 'unintelligible', while Langham considered the match entirely suitable:

It is ... no more unintelligible than the reason of Orestes for killing Clytemnestra his mother, or the reasons of Minerva and the Areopagus in acquitting him upon the ground that his father, murdered by Clytemnestra, was a blood relation, whereas the murderess, his mother, was not.

The 'unintelligible' aspect of the question is consequent upon the application to it of a standard of thought differing from that upon which the action... was taken.

Epeli and his cousin were of the same blood, virtually the same person. In former times both might have suffered for the offence. Epeli moreover was a nobody, who did not know in which village he was born:

To the Chiefs who concur with the views of the woman's family Epeli comports himself - as is generally the case with teachers taken from amongst the lowest order of the people - with some conceit and insolence. He informs them by letter that 'God' and he 'laugh' together over their 'empty heads'.

It is interesting to observe how this poor fellow, after a year or two of tuition under a

12 Thurston's memo. encl. Mitchell to C.O., 10 May 1887, CO83/45.
Missionary - places himself upon terms of easy familiarity with the Almighty -

'In old times' observes one Chief 'you would have been killed for what you have written'.

This is perfectly true, the 'old times' being any day antecedent to the 10th October 1874.

Being in a state of upward social transition and under British Law, the commoner does not expiate his insolence by death, but is sent to live for a few months under the supreme chief of his province.\(^{13}\)

In a suicide case complained of, Taniela Mataki's, said Thurston satirically, Langham could have alleged with no more than his usual degree of exaggeration that Taniela would be alive now, if Thurston had not angrily instructed Ratu Epeli to send him home. Once there, Taniela (betrayed by the teacher he had made his confidant) was so badgered about his land dealings with Ratu Marika that he hanged himself. After all was said, Thurston thought, so much malice came oddly from Langham when you reflected that in the Jubilee Year of 1885 the Qase Levu had (in vain) invited him to preside at an open air meeting to be held in Suva and 'deliver an Oration' after which the proceedings were to close with prayer - and a subscription.\(^{14}\)

Langham's attack helped Thurston convince Mitchell the policy should be maintained. Mitchell had then to convince the Colonial Office. He had side-stepped a proposal - in part imposed upon an inexperienced Secretary of State by Parr - to saddle him with a formal commission of enquiry, but he was instructed to report back after investigation.\(^{15}\) He should have found Fijian bitterness, apathy, helplessness and starvation. As he went to Bau with the voluble Lieutenant-Governor beside him, inspected Kadavu, crossed Viti Levu and walked from Naduri to Nasavusavu, Mitchell instead found vitality, superabundance of food. And though the death-rate exceeded the births, it was not observably due to tyranny.

\(^{13}\) Ibid.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.; FCSO 87/679.

\(^{15}\) Minutes on Parr to C.O., 26 August 1886, CO83/44; ibid., Mitchell to C.O., 29 September 1886.
His opinion had little public effect, though. He left Fiji within the year. It was then open to Parr to tell whomever would listen that kind Sir Charles had fled because he could not bear the sight of the poor Fijians' oppression.16

Meantime, Thurston's pride had been salved by a Knighthood. He was made K.C.M.G. - and took it very nicely, said Mitchell. He had also been saved from his awkward situation in Fiji by a summons to the Washington Conference on Samoa. A fruitless conference of the three treaty powers, it collapsed on 27 July, soon after his own late arrival - but not before he had primed the American Secretary of State, Bayard, upon Germany's 'little pranks' in the Pacific. Bayard partly based his demand for continued Samoan independence on what Thurston told him.17 The result was that a secret deal between Britain and Germany to give the latter a mandate in Samoa was knocked over by American veto. Since Lord Salisbury's prior inclination to make this deal had been strengthened by Thurston's secret proposal about Samoa-Tonga, his public self had in effect ridden down his private one. When Thurston defended the British attitude to George H. Bates long afterwards, though, he might never have made this secret proposal - nor repeated it, as he did.18 It was simply that Britain knew she would not fight Germany over Samoa, while America could not yet bring herself to admit the same, he told Bates.

We are both in the presence of a great wrong. We both desire to intervene on behalf of the weaker party ... We, however, are an European Power - you a trans-Atlantic one. We are hampered by considerations & selfish interests from which you are happily free - yet you will not fight - Nor shall we.19

He raged inwardly. The Germans had given too little while

16 Mitchell's reports, CO83/45 and 46; encl. Parr to Selborne, 24 September 1895, CO83/62.
17 West to F.O., 30 June 1887, encl. F.O. to C.O., 4 August 1887, CO 225/71.
18 'Memorandum by Sir J. Thurston on Tonga', FOCP No.125.
19 Thurston to Bates, 3 April 1889, George Handy Bates Samoan Papers.
talking too much. He gathered they would press their own
land claims while discounting others. They would put Samoa
'under the arbitrary, jealous and selfish government of a
private trading company'.²⁰ At least prevent this, he
begged the Foreign Office in private letters from America
seeking permission to visit England.²¹

He had not wanted to leave Fiji at all this time. He
was a home dog now, especially with Amy pregnant again. She
was carrying, it turned out in October, their son Jack. And
he was afraid his two daughters would forget him.²² His
masters could at least let him cross the Atlantic so that he
could find out precisely what they were going to do with this
new K.C.M.G. While he enjoyed himself with Bates and the
large Thurston clan in America, laughed at holiday society
in Saratoga Springs and went to the American Bar Association's
annual dinner, he was wondering whether he should press for
a colony in the West Indies. He needed somewhere he could
save money. He did not want his children to grow up in the
tropics, though.²³

He was pursued by Samoa across the Atlantic. In
Washington Weber had sought him out to say that, the confer­
ence a failure, Germany could go on now in tacit agreement
with Britain.²⁴ He had not been in England a week when he
heard the Germans were doing so. They had declared war,
installed Tupua Tamasese at Mulinu'u and sent Malietoa Laupepa
into exile. For Germany to press on in this way had been no
part of Thurston's proposal. He was sickened as he read of
Samoan events in The Times on 8 September:

We shall I suppose do nothing but recognise
accomplished facts. We dream & talk. Germany
acts - rifle in hand.

England has long since abandoned this role
with the weaker races - but to the German[s] -
now the most arrogant people on earth it has
become a normal course of action.²⁵

²⁰Thurston to Holland, 1 August 1887, Salisbury Papers.
²¹Idem.
²²See his letters to Eliza Morton, Perrins Papers.
²³Idem; and Thurston to Kew, 31 July 1887, Kew Letters.
²⁴Thurston to Holland, 1 August 1887, Salisbury Paper.
²⁵Thurston to Chesson, 8 September 1887, RH BE MSS S18 C149/53.
Salisbury was away in France - in fact no-one was in London, he told Chesson; but that really made no difference. He himself had just come up from Hampshire and was going straight back.

The country is the best place for a man disappointed and disgusted with the muddle of Pacific Island matters. Pacific! indeed!!!!

He went back to shoot rabbits in the woods around Awbridge House with his cousin Bob, home from Burma - 'it is very quick work & great fun but I felt very sorry for the poor little bunnies'. His disillusionment, communicated to a reporter perhaps on the way to the station, was gleefully picked up from the British press via New Zealand by the Fiji Times. Sir John had retired into the Hampshire woods. How sad that Disraeli was no more. It was tough on Sir John. With enormous tenacity he had established himself as the great Pacific expert. Now the contraction of British influence promised to make him redundant.

He had a companion worry over Tonga. Mitchell had sailed there earlier in the year to investigate an attempted assassination of Baker, in the wake of which persecution of Wesleyans had redoubled. Thurston's disinclination to regard Baker as a devil and his sense of shock that Wesleyan polemicists seemed to approve of the attempt, were not decreased by a question in the Commons aimed at himself: would he, or Mitchell, investigate? The Wesleyans gained nothing by Thurston's absence. Mitchell concluded that Tupou himself was the main spirit behind the Free Church. If Baker had not kept all his promises to Thurston, the fault was not necessarily Baker's. Let the Wesleyans stew, thought Thurston when Chesson reproached the High Commissioner for this report. Very likely they were disappointed, for it was an impartial one. Then he shot his rabbits and, still planning to introduce crushing-mills into Fiji, worried Kew for ideas.

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26 Idem.
27 Thurston to Eliza Morton, 26 October 1887, Perrins Papers.
28 Fiji Times, 26 November 1887.
29 Thurston to Chesson, 8 September 1887, loc. cit.
about new oil-bearing seeds.

He longed for the tropics in the English autumn. Yet a return to Fiji had particular drawbacks. While he was being passed over for promotion his colleagues were going ahead. G.R. Le Hunte was offered the Presidency of Dominica but Le Hunte at least was his friend. More painful, MacGregor had just been made Administrator of British New Guinea after assiduous cultivation of powerful men in Australia. This was a post that Thurston did not much want but had expected to be offered, and would have taken. He let the Colonial Office know he was disappointed, said he would not accept any West African colony, and continued to handle Fiji's business from Awbridge House. Finance was much in question. He let nobody forget the cheapness of his favourite form of government - £6,500 spent on Fijians in 1886 against £16,000 received from them in direct taxes. A deficit of £4,000 in the first half of 1887 was expected. Expenditure must be brought within the £62,400 of revenue. A cheaper Governor than Mitchell was one answer, a Governor capable of being his own Colonial Secretary a better one. At the beginning of October the proposal came from within the Colonial Office that Fiji's financial difficulties and the problem of finding Sir J. Thurston a governorship should be solved at one stroke. Let Mitchell go to a more affluent colony; let Thurston take over Fiji and save it £2,350 by accepting half the salary and doing the work of Colonial Secretary too.

He made no difficulty; he would go for £2,000 if the Treasury would find £500 as a grant-in-aid, or even for £1,500 if not; though to his friends he expressed reluctance, a feeling of insufficiency, concern about his resources. Shortness of money would at least enable him to get rid of a couple of men he thought inefficient. But with MacGregor going too, he would be relying on very junior men: like

30 Thurston to C.O., 1 October 1887, CO83/47.
31 Idem, 26 September 1887, CO83/47.
32 Minutes on Mitchell to C.O., 7 July 1887, CO83/46.
33 Thurston to Chesson, 18 November 1887, RH BE MSS S18 Cl49/44; and to Thiselton-Dyer, 11 December 1887, Kew Letters.
W.L. Allardyce, one of the best cadets from the early '80s, who could run the Provincial Office so long as his inclination to drive as much as advise Fijians was kept in check; and B.H. Thomson, son of the Archbishop of York, whom Thurston knew to be able but out of sympathy with employing Fijians in high office, and whom he reckoned a spoilt young dog out to make a convenience of the public service. Thomson repaid the compliment by thinking Thurston overdid his playing the role of Fijian chief. Still, Thurston never doubted what he must do. As he put it to Chesson, he must go back or see the native policy founder. That is how Sir Robert Herbert put it to his colleagues when one showed a disposition to despise the new Governor for his careless attitude to his own pocket. He would not get the £500, it turned out; and though he had been led to expect another £500 as High Commissioner, he told Downing Street he would gladly give this up if it could be spent instead on a Deputy Commissioner in the Solomon Islands - a proposal surprisingly regarded as 'too honourable for us to take advantage of...'

As he made his farewells he found the Colony much in the London newspapers. Another settler fantasy was being played out. Incorporation with Australasia was in the wind again. As a footnote to financial trouble in the Fiji Times, its editor T.H. Prichard had been compelled to legue - 'by reason of his vocation leaving him', Thurston said. When he sailed to a life of small newspapers in Victoria and Tasmania, Prichard carried yet another petition for incorporation. This time it was with Victoria. In Melbourne he formed a Fiji Annexation Committee, which held a few meetings and got into the press.

Its chairman was the manager of the Mago Island Company, Edward Langton - he who had assured Thurston that 'the Fijian is "a slave Sir"'. Langton told the Premier of Victoria

34 Herbert's admonition of Meade, on Treasury to C.O., 13 December 1887, CO 83/47.
35 Round's minute, ibid.
36 Thurston to Chesson, 19 November 1887, RH BE MSS S18 149/45.
37 'Minutes of the Fiji Annexation Committee', T.H. Prichard Papers, NLA; and see his daughter's autobiography: Katherine Susannah Prichard, Child of the Hurricane (Sydney, [1964]).
38 Thurston to Gordon, 20 June 1881, SM Add MSS 49204.
that, when Fiji was annexed to Victoria, all land not
alienated to Europeans would be vested in the Crown - and
hence made available for European settlement. Prichard
avowed that this new annexation would allow Fijians and
Europeans to make progress side by side. Fijians' law-
abiding, tractable character might be counted on, they jointly
assured the Victorian Legislature. And investors, many of
them living in Victoria, well knew that change from autocratic
Crown Colony government was essential if £3,000,000 capital
was to be saved, invested as it now was in a place where the
bulk of revenue went on salaries and where restrictions 39
prevented the profitable employment of money and labour.

There were echoes in the Morning Post, which supposed
transfer of responsibility for Fiji to Victoria would be
equally acceptable to the British tax-payer at whose cost,
the Morning Post imagined, Fiji was expensively misgoverned.
The editor had been got at, Thurston told Chesson in a letter
intended to cover his rear. The article

is not only replete with old errors and with old and
dishonest ways of putting things - but its reference to
'Governor-General', Receiver Genl, Attorney Genl.,
Surveyor Genl. &c. is a local Fiji joke generally
ending with a request for a 'Scavenger General'. 40

Prichard was 'representing' the 'inhabitants' of Fiji in the
way Leefe had before Thurston silenced him by making him
Deputy Commissioner to Tonga with broad hints about how he
had better behave towards His Tongan Majesty. Prichard,
said Thurston,

perhaps represents 1 or 2 hundred planters,
overseers, shopkeeper & clerks, but not all the
Europeans & not one of the 126000 native subjects
of the Queen (Fijian & Indian) dwelling in Fiji
whose existence, as usual, is quietly ignored. 41

39 Encls Mitchell to C.O., 4 November and 14 December 1887,
   CO83/47.
40 Thurston to Cheeson, 19 November 1887, loc. cit.
41 Idem, 19 November 1887.
The same paper's report of recent Victorian parliamentary proceedings on aboriginal affairs showed how Fijians would fare at the hands of an elected white legislature. He wanted to reply but was not sure how best to do it.

I find that the 'Melbourne Argus' has taken Mr. Prichard up and I have no doubt he will be a thorn in my flesh....

I am afraid that the Govt would let Fiji or anything else go that would avoid or even shelve a worry, but on this question have reason to think they are afraid neither the Commons nor the country wd stand it.42

A few days later, he had a cable from the annexationists 'congratulating themselves and me!!' on his appointment and begging him to arrange the long-talked-of reciprocity treaty with Victoria.43

Then he sailed; and having stayed again with Gordon at Colombo, he felt it wise to spend a few days in Melbourne to disabuse Premier Gillies of his Prichard-inspired misconceptions. Thurston was given a public luncheon by old friends of the Suva auctions, James McEwen & Co. Their representative - likewise with money in the Mago Island Co. - talked of the pressing commercial need for representative government in Fiji. He would do his best to promote commerce, Thurston promised, and he was no pessimist:

He would adopt the words used by Captain Marryat in one of his novels, and say that if he were rolling over in the surf, and heard the last buzz of the water in his ears as he went into insensibility, he would still hope.

But he would make no fundamental changes in policy. 'If they wanted labourers they must get them from without.' With only fourteen Fijians to the square-mile, there was in reality none of the great labour reservoir that Europeans imagined from seeing Fijians lounging about town. Men were to be seen doing nothing in Fiji, just as they were in Collins Street,

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42 Idem, 19 November 1887.
43 Idem.
but he did not know why Fijians should be made to work. Their direct contribution to revenue actually paid all the European departmental heads, met the cost of the Fijian Administration, then left some £2,200 over.

Finally he spoke about his delicate position in returning. He raised laughter by reading contradictory press comments about himself. His return as Governor came as a threat, an unwelcome surprise, said the Fiji Times in a column reprinted by the Argus; unquestionably Fiji's future was in his hands and, continued the Fiji Times in a sublime nonsequitur, no one who knew him would doubt that he would bring prosperity to the Colony and credit to himself. 44

'I began life at sea, and I preferred stormy to fine weather,' so Thurston identified himself on the eve of returning to his island kingdom where his five months old son John Bates Horatio waited - among many ghosts. 45 He could indulge himself. He would not extend cramped uncomfortable Government House; for years, up to five children shared one room with their nurse; 46 but he could square it with his conscience to spend £150 of the Colony's money on a Kew-trained nurseryman. Functioning as a one-man Department of Agriculture, this harried man laid out a new botanic garden between Government House and the sea. From his verandah Thurston's view to the reef was across Sumatra tobacco and Blue Mountain coffee. Through the passage he could see ships come - the warships on High Commission business, the mail-steamers with European news. If a mail- steamer were flying the rendezvous signal flag he sent off his gig, with its oarsmen in white singlets piped with red, to fetch the friend whose presence the signal indicated. One visitor was J.T. Arundel, copra and guano merchant in isolated islands to the eastward. 47

44 Quoted Argus, 3 February 1888.
45 Argus, 3 February 1888.
46 FCSO 83/2092.
47 John La Farge, Reminiscences of the South Seas, 398; and Thurston's letters to Kew.
48 Arundel, Journal; Thurston to Arundel, 16 August 1896, J.T. Arundel Papers.
Thurston had to legislate for labour relations there, which was not easy: 'Malayo Polynesians are pretty hot blooded, and while they submit to authority they might resist any attempt of their masters (and on their own decision) to impose really serious punishment'.

He had American guests too — acquaintances from his Washington trip, painter John La Farge and historian Henry Adams, whom he had invited to come when his wet season was over. His house was a dropping back into civilised life for them, after their year in Samoa and Tahiti. Though he struck Adams as a colonial, very like a Harvard College American, rather than an Englishman, he did contrive a country-house atmosphere. There were books and magazines, cricket and dressing for dinner, relief that Mr Gladstone was not back in office and instruction in botany. What recalled the guests to their surroundings was the hollow note of the Zali summoning them to table, and the huge, half-naked figures who waited on them.

Part-Europeans were not in evidence. When the lonely nurseryman proposed to marry one, Thurston forbade him the house. Though he received deputations of part-Europeans to learn how some wanted to form a separate part-European association, while others hoped instead to be accepted into the white community, he could never feel the sympathy for this downtrodden group that he had with Ratu Lala, or with Ratu Epeli's eldest son Ratu Etuate Wainiu, to whom he lent a boat to bring seed-yams down the Rewa.

Pity Sir John would never have time to write what he knew, La Farge thought. His conversation was 'charming, full of information, and with a great enjoyment of fun'. The Battle of Nasova could be made very funny — he had polished it over the years. His stories were 'like little comedies'. He could make old Ratu Namusadroka laugh too. Pity the

49 Thurston to Bramston, 6 January 1892, C0225/38.
50 Thurston to Adams, 8 November 1890, Massachusetts Historical Society.
52 La Farge, Reminiscences, 464,
53 La Farge, Reminiscences, 408.
wanderers had not come to him first, thought Adams. A few weeks with Sir John would have been 'a first-rate education for travel'.\textsuperscript{54} And so if Fiji was a gloomy place after undiluted Polynesia, Fiji's Governor sparkled - which was an achievement, given that Adams was an exigent observer of men. Even the more relaxed La Farge had not been overwhelmed by another South Seas celebrity, the 'great novelist' Robert Louis Stevenson.\textsuperscript{55} They had met him at Apia, where Stevenson settled soon after Thurston's own return to the Pacific.

They were to fall out, the High Commissioner and the novelist. Known to be self-made and touchy, Thurston got the worst of it in opinion at large. That was his usual experience. He enjoyed his image, the man who had played most of the roles a European could play in the Pacific yet had always been true to one ideal. Adams saw him as one of the three most notable Englishmen in the Pacific - the others were Baker and Grey, which would have made him look wry.\textsuperscript{56} But he was not often allowed to forget that many Europeans insisted he had a forked tail.

From Tahiti to New Guinea and from Hawaii to New Zealand and Australia I am perhaps the best known of Her Majesty's servants and...have come into contact and at times into conflict with all sorts and conditions of men, who have seldom shown a disposition to favour me with over generous criticism.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{54}Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, 20 June 1891, \textit{Letters}, 494.
\textsuperscript{55}\textit{Reminiscences}, 409.
\textsuperscript{56}Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, 18 December 1891, \textit{Letters}, 454.
\textsuperscript{57}Thurston to C.O., 12 September 1893, CO83/57.
Chapter 14

'Fiji is indeed my land'

He too would travel again in the Great South Sea, for all his burden of desk-work, Thurston had promised himself as he landed at Suva to take possession on the evening of 26 February 1888. To some welcomers, it had seemed their graves yawned. Langham's looked well-dug. Talk was that Qase Levu would bolt. He bridled at the suggestion and rowed out to be humble before Anti-Christ while the irreverent chuckled.¹ Four years later, Thurston too was laughing over an appeal for his help at the Wesleyan Navuloa Training Institute. Students were in revolt. 'What do you think of the Emeute at Navuloa?' he asked Carew.

I hear that the Bau and neighbouring Missionaries are as pricked bladders and that poor old Mr Langham has collapsed.

Let me have a note from you...telling me what you think of the incident and why the appeal - from such a quarter - 'to Caesar'.²

Still amused, he told Fuller the story: six young fellows expelled for refusing to cut fuel for the mission's steam launch; then, wholesale rebellion by all the students because, 'with foolish want of temper', the missionaries blustered that anyone who felt aggrieved over the expulsions could leave too. The students appealed to him, while the mission, 'like a hive of disturbed bees', eagerly accepted his offer of mediation. In the enormous church where they

¹Langham to Worral, 8 December 1887, MOM 295; and see the description, dated 8 March 1888, by Allardyce, which Gordon copied into his diary - BM Add MSS 49264.

²Thurston to Carew, 17 May 1892, Carew Papers.
met for a public hearing, the rebel leader put their case 'with clearness possession and moderation'; and then, sitting at the reading-desk so that he had the parsons 'sitting under me', Thurston heard the missionaries out while they

blended anger and narrowmindedness with a wholesome funk for their reputation and for the possible wreck of the Institute.³

He had never doubted his ability to get along with the white Wesleyans in general. Only their Bishop had remained hostile - in part, Thurston sometimes felt, from an implacable temper which made him the only effective proselytizing missionary among them. But he was ready for Langham.

Invited to declare for peace or war, the Qase Levu chose peace.⁴ A few months after the Navuloa émeute, when Thurston had become a sought-after visitor at the Bau mission-house, his manner was caught perfectly by Langham in a letter to a colleague. Flushed with embarrassed rage over wicked salacious things he had found Fijian students writing on their slates, Langham had unburdened himself by writing to Sir John. Yet he well knew that, if they were talking together, Thurston would have replied that Europeans were often much worse. 'And I believe he is right too...'.⁵

His nine years' almost unchallenged rule as Governor went to show that Langham was not alone among white residents in acknowledging that. Thurston faced them at a welcoming banquet - watery soup and stringy turkey washed down with beer and bad champagne, when he would have preferred brandy and soda.⁶ It was not an easy occasion. The Chairman, William Hennings, indulged the hope that, his own master now, Thurston would at last demonstrate his freedom from that mistaken pseudo-philanthropy in Fijian affairs which had nearly ruined whites and done Fijians no good.⁷ Truly said, most listeners agreed. Yet none could seriously have expected relief. When J.V. Tarte, present to represent Taveuni,

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³Thurston to Fuller, n.d. [c. August 1895], C083/61.
⁴Thurston's minute 4 September 1888, FCSO 87/3296; and see the tone of Langham to Worrall, 1 November 1888, F3/C.
⁵Langham to Worrall, 7 March 1894, MOM 295.
⁶Allardyce's description, BM Add MSS 49264.
⁷Colonists' Banquet to Sir John B. Thurston... (Suva, 1888).
applied to be relieved of liability to pay a labourer maimed in his service, Thurston refused with the comment that this was typical of Tarte. When John Rennie - smouldering over the man who had gaol ed him in 1873 - tried to lease an island for the sake of its firewood, Thurston pointed out to his juniors the advisability of conserving wasting assets for Fijian use.

Racial assumptions showed in judgements given by one of his European Stipendiary Magistrates, former planter N.S. Chalmers. A woman laid charges of attempted rape against a Fijian servant whose defence was disbelieved by the magistrate but not by the Governor. Ordering the man's discharge, Thurston commented:

If this evidence is sufficient, that is to say, the evidence contained in the notes, then I have no hesitation in saying that any native in the Colony is liable to flogging and imprisonment whenever any unscrupulous woman thinks fit to bring a charge against him.

He did not respond to the feeling that rape lurked for white women around every corner as thirty-odd years later, in Papua, Sir Hubert Murray responded with legislation providing the death penalty for attempted rape of a white woman. Whites would assert special status in Fiji too if the Governor did not watch his own white officials. No European would ever be awarded a flogging for assaulting a labourer; neither then should a labourer be flogged in the converse case, said Thurston, and quashed one.

There was to be as ample equality at law as would benefit the weaker party - the Fijians, an autonomous people. The native policy would be maintained. There would be no

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8 Encls Thurston to C.O., 8 March 1888, CO83/48; FCSO 94/1781.  
9 FCSO 93/3613.  
10 Minute 18 July 1892, FCSO 92/2023.  
11 Thurston to H. Gordon, c.October 1890 (draft), FCSO 90/961.  
12 FCSO 92/2123.
second thoughts, no faltering now its architect's personal goal had been attained. Thurston did not accept Hennings' invitation to recant when he spoke in reply at the banquet. He simply reminded settlers that if they attempted familiarity he would know how to meet it, spoke warmly of MacGregor - who got most of the cheers - promised economy in government, and urged settler-self-help, moderate expectations and attention to small industries.13

His listeners represented a tiny enclave 'where the relations of men oscillate between coalition one month and opposition the next', as he said when he was denying them the right to trial by jury in interracial cases.14 It was amusing to be charged with silencing the Fiji Times by passing an occasional government brief to its lawyer-editor, P.S. Solomon. Solomon wanted no despot to stare him down. He required constitutional government - 'under which half a dozen gentlemen elected by fewer than a thousand Europeans would control the interests and destinies of 120,000 Fijians, Indians and Europeans'.15

Even so, Thurston did put pressure on, and dangle rewards before Solomon.16 And he was prepared to woo planters by giving practical assistance like importing new coffee seed or buying rice-polishing machinery so that they could see for themselves how profitably it could be put to work. His Government House ginger Kew found particularly fine. Wanting tobacco grown for export, he would not rest until Fiji produced a cigar to rival Sumatra's. Thurston imported seed. He encouraged planter E.J. Lanyon to learn the curing process in Sumatra, and was ready with a lease of land on the Wainimala, at a government-subsidised rental, when the proprietor of the Fiji Times led a few other notables in forming the Fiji Tobacco Company.17 A creaky undercapitalized company,

13 Colonists' Banquet....
14 Thurston to C.O., 25 May 1891, CO83/54.
15 Thurstom to C.O., 13 December 1894 (confidential), CO83/59; for Solomon on Thurston, see New Zealand Herald, 31 October 1894.
16 Thurston to Fuller, 2 June 1889 (extract), CO83/50.
17 Thurston to C.O., 16 February 1891, CO83/54; idem, 21 July 1894, CO83/59; Kew to C.O., 28 March 1892, CO83/56; FCSO 91/688, 3552, 92/1409, 93/653, 96/1394.
it owed much to the Governor's enthusiasm. Fijians felt this too. Lanyon would be kept in check if he showed any disposition to override Fijian rights, Thurston assured Carew privately. Carew's Wainimala people had only to deal fairly in order to earn tax-money and refunds, as well as rental.\textsuperscript{18} And theirs and the white man's tobacco, copra, sugar and fruits should go to new markets in Canada by the Vancouver-Australian line of steamers which he encouraged to call from 1893 onward.

As Thurston saw it, there should be government encouragement of European enterprise, especially where profit and perhaps education in agriculture would accrue to Fijian landlords. There was certainly to be protection of Indian immigrants, where this could be achieved with the present inadequate staff. But Fiji was for the Fijians. If Europeans in his administration thought the country's future as a developed colony lay with the Indians, they did not say so within his hearing.\textsuperscript{19} And if they felt free to make open comment upon Fijian mortality - on which in great part they based their scenario for the Indian-dominated future - he did not accept their metaphysical talk about a 'dying race.'

Nor did he believe the so-called 'communal system' caused the infant mortality which accounted for the greater proportion of deaths. Child-care was lacking, sanitation and care of the sick. If houses were solidly built, if MacGregor's Fijian medical practitioners could be made more efficient, if European doctors would take more active, more scientific interest in what was actually happening in particular areas to make children die, and if mothers could be got to care for their children as in the old days when the club followed if they were idle - then the decline could be arrested. He shrank from compulsion. Sly jokes in Namata were better than preaching. What use was it to issue regulations ordering sick people to the provincial hospital, or forbidding women to go fishing when pregnant? Even it if were desirable, there would be no effect when the Fijian

\textsuperscript{18}Thurston to Carew, 'Monday Morning', Carew Papers.

\textsuperscript{19}Berkeley to C.O., 28 June 1897, with Hunter's 18 June encl., CO83/66.
Administration was in the hands of Fijians.20

There were Europeans in the Fijian Administration, of course. Jimmy Cocks was Assistant Native Commissioner. Since Thurston recommended Cocks to Gordon years before, this youth brought up among Fijians yet resistant to yaqona had become addicted to whisky. He was like other old hands in the general service of the colony. Victims of tropical languor, they sought means of deadening the aching boredom and sense of disappointment and deprivation in their stranded lives. The most efficient were often faintly ridiculous figures like earnest G.A.F.W. Beauclerc, Native Tax Accountant, failed businessman, sometime schoolmaster, who had a quaint line in Fijian translations. Long dark evenings spilled over into weary hours in the Provincial Office next day. The bleary-eye and bottle in the desk drawer ruled there, amid work undone and backbiting among the drinkers. In September 1889 Thurston ordered a formal inquiry. Ratu Kadavulevu was revealed to be doing the routine work while Cocks and his Chief Clerk P.S. Friend, quarrelling, tippled steadily. When Cocks resigned, un lamented by his brother-in-law Dr MacGregor, there remained among the dipsomaniacs D.S. Chisholm. He made off to Tonga on a forged travel warrant in 1891 and, after his return, was committed to the Lunatic Asylum for a spell. Friend's turn came in 1896 when Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi accused him of misappropriating £30. He died of alcoholism early next year.

To all this, the response from Government House was restrained. If old-hands whose plantations had failed or businesses collapsed would toe his line, Thurston would get them a salary when he could. He had appointed Chalmers out of pity. When Friend's hour struck, Thurston commented that for two or three years past he had noticed Friend smelling like a whisky cask even at nine in the morning; but he had taken no drastic action. He was concerned for Chisholm, long his clerk in charge of Native Taxes. He may have felt additional responsibility because Chisholm, far into physical and mental collapse, claimed persecution by a former patron who could only have been Thurston. Perhaps recognising in Chisholm a victim of his own elevation, Thurston wrote to

20 See his comments at FSCO 91/1688 (encl. in 96/2232), 91/1253, 92/1562, 94/1494 (encl. in 94/3887), 94/2506; Minutes on Bua Provincial Council Book, February 1892, and on Lomaiviti Book, November 1897.
him privately with the prospect of another job and inquired of his wife whether she needed money. Chisholm's was 'the saddest of all spectacles', Thurston told the Colonial Office, 'the wasted life of an honest, but self-indulgent man'.

As old acquaintances suffered from the stresses of tropical life, so young subordinates arriving as cadets from Britain revealed their human frailties in the flesh, alcohol and the cash box. Marriott was accidentally revealed as buying sexual favours through the chiefs, using Bau as a trysting-place with Samoan girls. Thurston gave him leave to go home for a wife and, in another case, tried to keep an erring boy in places where his discretion might increase. While Thurston was holidaying in Auckland in 1893, F.C. Henry was nonetheless detected in petty embezzlement and fled to America. 'I have heard no more of Henry', Thurston told the Colonial Office privately, 'and am disposed to add - hope I never may.' Downing Street wondered whether, his bite distinctly gentler than his bark, he was not too complaisant with his juniors. Sympathy for broken or youthful men apart, he could not pick and choose when he was running the Colony on a shoestring. He really had not enough men to man his guns. As he put it to Gordon, the Colony 'like Bligh's boats crew in days of yore is being rationed on a square inch of biscuit and a wineglassful of water'.

He was feared among his white subordinates, nonetheless. Chief Justice Henry Berkeley from Jamaica and his brother Humphrey reserved their attempts at self-aggrandisement until a weaker man ruled. One of the more socially eminent old hands in government, the Wykhamist Hamilton Hunter who had impressed even MacGregor as unduly pro-white, was kept in subordinate offices. Despairing, Hunter appealed to a fellow Wykhamist in the Colonial Office for escape from 'this, to me,

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21 Thurston to C.O., 22 June 1894 (confidential), CO83/59.
22 Thurston to Fuller, 17 October 1893, CO83/57.
23 Minutes on Thurston to C.O., 12 August 1895, CO83/62.
24 Thurston to C.O., 12 October 1896, CO83/64; and to Gordon, 18 May 1890, copied into Gordon's journal, BM Add MSS 49265.
most detestable Colony' and its hard-line Governor.26

Thurston was a hard-liner on the Indian community. Free-Indian settlements were to be encouraged, to the extent that land might be made available to them, though not at the expense of opening up roads to markets. The result was that Indian settlers preferred to pay high prices to Europeans for leases on the Rewa.27 They were not allowed into Fijian villages, even though occasionally a district council might indicate that a couple of Indian lessors would be welcome. Individual Indians, wandering upriver footloose or as peddlars, provided entertainment for their Fijian hosts.28 Equally, on the sugar plantations which were the sole raison d'être of the Indians' presence in Fiji, they were not to be entirely at the mercy of sirdars in small things and the C.S.R. Co. in large - not to be badgered about from one plantation to another at the millers' convenience, for example.29 In April 1890 Thurston found himself unusually pressed with work of a not agreeable character - connected with Indian Immigration and a case of what I regard as very culpable neglect on the part of our largest employers - and which I am determined in spite of local newspapers shall not happen again.30

The case involved sick Indians from Nausori who, represented as being convalescent, were received for a change of air at the government's Nukulau depot. Uncared for, they arrived emaciated as skeletons. Where would the Colony be without Indian immigration? he demanded next year.31 He ought to have added - where would it be without the C.S.R. Co.? He was negotiating with them for 3,000 acres on the Labasa.

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26 Hunter to Antrobus, 28 October 1893, C083/57; Thurston to C.O., 21 December 1894 (confidential), C083/60.
27 FCSO 95/827.
28 E.g., FCSO 88/2154; and especially his minute of 18 December 1893, FCSO 92/1380.
29 Thurston's minute 15 September 1896, FCSO 96/2858.
30 Thurston to Fuller, 10 April 1890, C0225/34; FCSO 90/707, 708, 843.
31 FCSO 91/2124.
Plate 9 Vunidawa, Viti Levu, early 1890s: W.S. Carew reads the Governor’s Address.

Plate 10 ‘Fiji is indeed my land’: at Vunidawa with Amy, Nellie, A.B. Joske and an officer of the Armed Native Constabulary, in the early 1890s.
He extracted a rising rental but, generally, gave better terms than the company had secretly expected to get.32

He never made himself acceptable to the C.S.R. Co. Equally, in this time of financial stringency, he was painfully aware that he could not intervene as the Indians' situation required. Low earnings, bad food, high death-rate, especially among children - these occupied him, and whether they could be dealt with by more frequent inspections, or whether the law was at fault in making the employer sole judge of what constituted fully completed task-work, hence judge of what wages were due. The company was determined not to pay a labourer more than a shilling a day, so set its tasks accordingly. Recognition of the employers' attitude, with irritation at his own powerlessness, breaks through in a minute about deaths of Indian children. It would be difficult I fear to enlist the sympathies of employers in the matter of nurseries...but I should be quite prepared to insist upon provision being made....33

He always found it more satisfying to dominate among Fijians than Europeans. He believed Fijians saw him as the link between their past and future.34 In May 1888 he had sailed to Sawaike for installation as Governor at that year's Bosevakaturaga. He received presentations of tabua and masi, then was rowed ashore with chiefs swimming beside his boat. In the masi-hung council house, built in semi-European fashion by Ratu Marika Toroca, he sat on pandanus mats nearly three feet deep to drink the Governor's yaqona:

Fiji is indeed my land. Have not my children been born among you! You well know that in years gone by, the fathers of many of you were known to me and were my friends; they have passed away but you still remain...and in all that concerns you my vigilance has never slumbered. Who then ought to take; who then

32Minute 5 May 1890, FCSO 92/638; Knox to Robertson, 23 October 1889, 2 January, 29 March and 23 April 1890, Fiji Letterbooks, C.S.R. Co. Archives.
33Minute 9 January 1895, FCSO 95/250.
34Thurston to C.O., 13 December 1894 (confidential), CO83/59.
His appointment meant fixity in regard to things suitable to them as a people. When there were changes - 'and what people can go on without them?' - they would be consulted. Any apprehension they felt about the future ought to arise from actions or omissions of them, the chiefs. He would guard their rights, but so he would all men's - Fijians or Europeans, chiefs or commoners. He gave great pleasure to the newly sycophantic Fiji Times by rebuking Ratu Peni Tanoa and Roko Tui Dreketi for bringing many followers above the limit of twenty-five he had decreed so that the hosts should not be over-burdened.36

His Fijian hearers were polite men. At the unveiling of the Cession memorial stone next year, Ratu Tevita Rasuraki announced that Turaga of the present day, descendants of the great dead whose names were cut in the stone, were fortunate men. They ruled the land in their turn, Fijians remained a people. Yet 'the greatest cause for congratulation was that they were still guided and ruled by their father the Governor who thoroughly understood the people and their needs'.37

On this human link between past and present, individual Fijians called as they had never come informally to the Governor before, and never could later. Emose Basu arrived one morning to tell how he was wronged by Buli Nakelo.38 Tevita Nalewakalou sought Thurston's protection when he could no longer bear Ratu Epeli Nailatikau's levying upon his yaqona beds. Ratu Namusadroka came for help in recovering women who were living with Suva storekeepers. He was certain to receive it, for Thurston held that vagabondage 'disintegrates the Fijian family, while the Fijian individual is a thing of the future'.39

A long way in the future, was Thurston's expectation. Meantime all Fijians were the property of their clan, and

35 Bosevakaturaga, 1888; Fiji Times, 9 May 1888.
36 Idem.
37 Ibid., 13 November 1889.
38 FCSO 92/4232.
39 FCSO 88/1442; Minute 13 April 1889, FCSO 89/536.
the clan in turn was responsible to its chiefs, whose rights were balanced by obligations. A chief had undoubted rights at custom to goods and services. Policy and justice dictated that they should be upheld. But there was the basic limitation that these rights applied only to his actual needs as the recognised head of a particular people – they could not be extended willy-nilly by a chief holding government office. Chiefs in office must live more simply than ruling chiefs in former days, he counselled. If his own protégé Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi – whom he claimed to have helped to educate after finding him as a boy reading about Captain Cook – wanted to get from Bau to Suva on government business, he should not charter a cutter but walk across to pick up a launch at Nausori, as Thurston would himself. By the same token, there was no reason why a Roko should be compelled to live in a thatch house; if Ratu Lala wanted a concrete one, Thurston could not see there was any anachronism in it.40

In other aspects of chiefly rule there was room for change, he agreed; and change too in the life of the land. It might be brought about slowly through discussion in Namata. The rights of the vasu, the sister's son, over the goods of the uncle and the latter's people he had always regarded as outlawed; and also that of tauvu, by which people with common descent could rifle one another's villages. He even wondered about solevu, at any rate as they were held at councils. Solevu must cease there, he said in his opening speech to the 1892 Bosevakaturaga. Though solevu themselves were useful customary institutions, councils were entirely new. They were post-Cession innovations to keep the life of the land and the colonial order running in tune. To confuse the two would be to benefit neither. And especially not – he may have felt – to benefit the imported councils. Business there often seemed to be done by rote, held secondary to the accompanying festivities. He never tired of reminding his hearers of the real purpose:

From the time of the establishment of the Colony it was the will of the Queen's Government that as far as possible the Chiefs of Fiji should take a large share in the management of their own affairs, that they should not be put aside as has been the manner in some countries similarly situated – as if

40FCSo 92/1127, 3706, 91/907.
because the country has come under the protection of a great state the natives no longer had any voice in the land, but had simply to do or not to do whatever they were told.41

This was the justification he offered dead friends like Ratu Golea who had never wanted to cede Fiji. When he followed diplomatic Ratu Tevita Rasuraki in speaking at the Cession stone's unveiling, Thurston pointed to the incised names of the chiefs who had signed away Fiji. And he asked rhetorically who would say their reluctant yielding up of the land on 10 October 1874 had not been justified by events since then?

41 Bosevakaturaga, 1892.
Chapter 15

'Supposing a chief steals'

For Cession to be justified, Fiji must still be ruled by authentic Fijian leaders. The difficulty of maintaining some of them in office was impressed on him for the umpteenth time as he came back from the 1892 Lau Bosevakaturaga with young Ro Tui Sawau in his tiny despatch-boat Clyde. Ro Tui Sawau was promising to become a drunken reprobate like his father the Roko of Rewa. The father was repeatedly suspended from office yet was always reinstated; while the son might be very little good to government, Thurston agreed with impatient European subordinates, he was less of a potential danger under the restraints of office than out of it.1

As Fijian societies were constituted leadership must come from the chiefs. It might come anyway, and for the worse, in terms of government's peace of mind, if it were not channelled through the Fijian Administration. The Fijian Administration wrapped itself into the life of the land. It guaranteed that life's continuance and, after all the uneasiness expressed at the first meetings of the Bosevakaturaga, in the '70s, interpreted central government's requirements so that men could accept or evade them. And perhaps the basis of the guarantee was that government's appointment of men to rule continued to be legitimised by descent.

Commoners did hold government office. Josefa Tawaki was one, Native Stipendiary Magistrate for Lomaiviti. He was admired by his European colleague and accepted by the people. 'A capital man', said Thurston, 'would we had more like him.'2 There was the rub. A little knot of Namata men had come into the service with Ratu Marika Toroca - although he hastened to point out that the principal of these, Niko

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1Minute 25 May 1892, FCSO 92/1697.
2Minute 1 April 1886, FCSO 86/91 (encl. in 90/2889).
Rabuku, was a *matanivanua*. Still, they were few. Graduates of Navuloa Wesleyan Training College, for the most part their numbers were not being increased by a government which put a theoretical premium on education, but, being able to afford only a very inadequate industrial school, limited itself beyond that to subsidising community effort, whether mission or secular. Men of low status put over chiefs found their lives uncomfortable. Josefa Tawaki needed an increase in salary. One of the simple *Lewe ni vanua* himself, he had no right to call on their help for his garden-planting or house repairs. He got no help from the chiefs because they resented his appointment.

Appointed a magistrate or provincial scribe, a commoner led a difficult life; as a buli, a near impossible one. He could not decently officiate in the ceremonial life of his district as a buli must do to be effective. Even a man of rank put over men whose descent was better would be in trouble about precedence at *solevu* and in the work of the land generally. A Roko Tui in such a case was even worse off, one without blood claims at all quite beyond the Fijian pale. Yet government required a measure of efficiency in bringing in taxes, or implementing warrants, such as the chiefs of the land were not always concerned to acquire.

And so when Thurston confirmed Ratu Neimani Dreu in office as Roko Tui Ba, they both knew the Government was putting an ambitious man in the way of more house-burning. A soft-spoken, striking man, Ratu Neimani had a relaxed manner which belied his ability to rule. In his youth he had been a leader in the *luweniwai* cult, and found this participation in sorcery perfectly consistent with preaching powerful sermons. He knelt before Thurston to take the oath of office, their hands clasped. 'Take, with this staff, authority to rule, as Roko Tui, in the province of Ba' — ran the litany:

To the people over whom you are placed be as a father; lead them; teach them; feed them. Take heed not to oppress them, and in all your acts remember that strict and solemn account which you must one day render at the judgement

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3 Ratu Marika to Governor, 15 November 1890, FCSO 90/3647.
4 Josefa to Native Commissioner, 5 August 1889, FCSO 89/2315 (encl. in 90/2889).
The judgement seats of Ba were more immediately in question, politically fragmented as Ba was, with no traditional centre whose chiefs possessed acknowledged precedence. It was for Ratu Neimani to create one. He attempted it, not by building up Narewa, the chief town in his own district of Nadi, but by establishing a new village nearby. There he would have the precedence which he could not hope to exact at Narewa where he had relatives senior to him. He was from a junior chiefly line. His elevation awoke jealousy in less capable seniors. The usual result was appeal to Vale Levu by the dissidents, plotting — and then in the Ba case, exile for their two leading spirits. As Thurston saw it:

Ratu Neimani is a Fijian of the old school — able & intelligent, but traversed and opposed in his ruling by the leading men of Nadi — who themselves have no individual ability, & who, on any subject but that of opposition to the Roko, dislike & suspect each other.

Neimani has been trying in his own way to break up the faction and has done so 'vaka viti'. It is better that an able Roko shd rule, even a little arbitrarily, than that the Province shd. be divided agst itself — like Ra for instance.

Ra's problem reasserted itself again in 1889 on the death of Roko Tui Bua. His kinsman Rasuraki, the dead Roko's own choice, succeeded him, and there was no Ra man capable of replacing Rasuraki. Thurston chose a man from the Provincial Office and took him over to offer the assembled seniors of the province. Even bulis maintained themselves with difficulty in faction-ridden Ra, he reminded them. Yet he would not put in a total stranger as their provincial head. He would be Roko Tui Ra himself; but rather than send a European Commissioner to represent him (as in the hills) he would appoint a Fijian whose rank was high in a place where parts of Ra had old ties — Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi of Bau.

5 Fiji Times, 9 May 1888.
6 FCSO 89/2287, 91/953, 2223; Deportation of Natives, 91/356.
7 Minute 27 July 1891, FCSO 91/953.
8 Fiji Times, 1 May 1889.
Whether or not Ra people saw much distinction between Ratu Jone as Commissioner or as Roko (which he later became), they did accept him. Would-be turbulent people, he described them to Thurston, much more interested in their solevu than in accomplishing the provincial work which Ratu Jone knew his superior thought important - the regular making of taxes in cane, maize and tobacco, cleaning the villages, and the care of infants and the sick, in the hope of stemming the deaths which made Ra a major worry. In order to get this work done, Ratu Jone soon had to compromise by reappointing Ratu Alivate Vutoni as Buli Rakiraki for the third time.9

Ratu Jone was an efficient administrator in the new style, with books on his table and glass in his windows. His son was to be a famous reawakener of the nineteenth century in Fijian affairs; his memory is now revered - Ratu Sir Josefa Lalabalavu V. Sukuna. So was Ratu Neimani Dreu an efficient man until the moment he resigned in 1899, two years after Thurston's death. And yet efficiency was not what Thurston put first in other provinces where the existing roko was the recognised head of the leading family.

Efficiency was little to be seen at Naduri, provincial centre of Macuata. Naduri was all gloom and dissension under the lethargic Ratu Kinijaoti Katonivere. Often efficiency seemed to demand Katonivere's removal, as it did the removal of Ratu Erone Loganimoce from his post of Roko Tui Lau when men of his own family had such contempt for him that they felt free to offer extreme domestic insults.10 In Katonivere's case a replacement could readily have been found - the Buli Macuata, Ratu Isikeli Kaitia, a son of Katonivere's old enemy Ritova with all his father's strength. It was thought of, but never done. Better to let time remove those whose tenure was legitimised by age as well as blood, Thurston felt. He knew what difficulties comparative youth still caused his foster-son in Cakaudrove, where he went on from Naduri. And when he visited Kadavu it was because a younger, more efficient Roko Tui Kadavu had replaced one grown old in office. Dislocation had resulted, and social embarrassment. Blind old Ratu Seruvevele Qaranivalu had been in and out of office since Cakobau's Government; replaced by Ratu Sairusi Dula, former Buli Tavuki, he could not reconcile himself to pensioned supersession. He employed his precedence in the

9 Ratu Jone to Governor, 1 December 1890, FCSo 90/3741.
10 FCSo 91/3840.
land to embarrass Ratu Sairusi's administration.

It was all in the business of personal rule, the eye to eye confrontation which Thurston too enjoyed - but not to the exclusion of a peaceful life for a province when a compromise offered itself, or even a capitulation. He capitulated over Lomaiviti. The efficiency achieved by Ratu Marika's appointment had been exacted at a high price in personal relations. Within a year of Thurston's installation at Sawaieke he received letters showing that ill-feeling continued there between the Roko and his bulis, with Bau urging the latter on. Ratu Marika complained that Buli Sawaieke despised government work and Marika's rule, ignored orders, cheated the people over tax-copra and payments on boats. This was the small-change of local politics. The usual outcome followed - a summons for the accused to visit Thurston. Thinking the charges overstrained, he cautioned Ratu Marika to use more tact. Marika lamented that, given the circumstances under which Thurston had appointed him to Lomaiviti, the Governor really should take his word.11

Perhaps Thurston should. Next year, emboldened by seeing Buli Sawaieke called to Suva, some of the people in his district followed the well-trod path of disobedience by moving for a separate buli; in the past they would have taken themselves off to another chief. Their ostensible grounds were that Buli Sawaieke worked them too hard. He was dismissed, just at the time his former colleague in the original resistance against Ratu Marika, Ratu Veni Dranidalo, had to be reinstated as Buli Moturiki. Ratu Veni's successor had been too grasping - or was not acceptable in blood.12 Another year passed, then Ratu Marika went gratefully home to Namata. And Ratu Epeli Nailatikau was reappointed in his place.

Thurston always found the aristocratic principle congenial. On holiday in New Zealand for the Jubilee celebrations in 1889, he heard his fellow guest the Governor of New South Wales tell 'a mob of greasy unwashed gaping people' that they represented 'the glorious product of Free and Liberal Institutions and were the Flowers of the English Race (whatever that is)'.

11 FCSO 90/492.
12 Ibid.; FCSO 90/1773.
I after the manner of Des Voeux said only 'Humph'! Had I said anything more articulate some of the Flowers would perhaps have brained me.13

The occasion passed into legend. He had taken members of the Armed Native Constabulary with him. They came back relating how, while other governors had been jostled by the crowds, they had taken care to ward democratic shoulders off their man.

'Paradoxical as it may sound', he once wrote 'the condition of Fijian life may be described as far-reaching and perfect Socialism which maintained itself by the existence and through the authority of despotic and powerful Chiefs'. The trouble was that chiefs like Ratu Epeli Nailatikau in the middle generation, and Adi Arieta's sons in the younger, now felt relieved of their obligations. They remembered only what was due to them. The elders were worried. Signing himself na Qase dina ni Viti - 'the true-minded elder of Fiji' - the former Chief Interpreter in the Provincial Office, Ratu Osea Tunivanua, put it to Thurston that the Lewe ni vanua were losing respect because the chiefs were departing from the true paths. They cared only for money. They would sell traders goods that should have been divided among the people. They took all they could, and gave little.14

'It has for years been very plain to me', Thurston agreed. He had reminded chiefs that they could never recover what they stood in danger of losing -

The respect and obedience of the people of the land. - For more than ten years the Chiefs have been warned of the folly... of their... unbecoming, unlawful, and unchieflike habits - new and mean things - not the old and good 'Ka vaka turaga'.

The Matanitu is ever working to maintain on one hand the true and proper 'Ka vaka turaga', and on the other the just rights & liberties of the 'lewe ni vanua'. But some of the Chiefs do not help, they forget their position as Chiefs. They

13 Copied into Gordon's diary, BM Add MSS 49266.
14 FCSO 89/1218.
neglect their duties in the land and think only of acquiring money, debauching women: taking all they can from the people and giving nothing back again.15

He investigated complaints - not often from the common people themselves, but usually from members of the chief's own family or caste. Some complaints came anonymously, others were made in person by figures bringing tabua and yaqona to catch him as he smoked his evening cigar or woke in the morning. Namusadroka came again, about his superior Ratu Rabici, the Roko, who was violent in drink, a source of shame to his province - and who, suspended yet again, responded in a way certain to get sympathy:

I know that we men differ. I tried this thing when I was young and my desire to drink has clung to me. I confess this to your Excellency for you understand me. I think of your Excellency much & the just decision of the Government with regard to me now. I know very well it is for my good.16

Let him be told of the Governor's pleasure at his attitude, Thurston accordingly directed; 'if he makes up his mind in a Chief-like way he will be strong to resist temptation and the company of men who have no real regard for him or his position in the land'.17 So much for G.A. Woods, whose hospitable if calculating house was one of Ratu Rabici's watering holes in Suva. But the influence was powerful and in March 1891 another rebuke went to him.18 On promise of Ratu Rabici's mending his ways, Thurston (who did not believe Fijians should be teetotallers when he, and most other whites, were not) had extended his liquor-permit. After a visit to Vale Levu itself, Rabici had fallen in with such white friends as Thurston still cursed privately but did not muzzle by legislation. He had poured libations into the ready glasses of young Fijians, and altogether so abused his liquor that he must not visit Suva for a year; his pay would be stopped for three months, his permit for longer.

15 Minute 14 May 1899, ibid.
16 Ratu Rabici to Governor, 18 March 1889, FCSO 89/1000.
17 Minute 29 April, ibid.
18 Idem, 19 March 1891, FCSO 91/905.
He was incorrigible, but Thurston could not bear defeat. At last, January 1895 found him in the rara at Burebasaga with all the office-holders and qase of Rewa cross-legged before his chair. White-haired, white-bearded then, with gold-rimmed reading spectacles in his pocket, he had to remind them that their chief now 'made a habit of arriving in Suva sober and getting drunk with the least possible delay'. If Ratu Rabici would not reform he must lose office finally; but this, Thurston supposed, would cause his hearers pain. If they would engage to help Rabici beat his craving, he should have another chance:

in order that they could discuss the subject with the utmost freedom amongst themselves, he would retire to the river bank and smoke a cigar, when that cigar was finished he would return and expect to receive a reply.

It worked for a month. Then the Roko sent out again for liquor and retired rapidly from office in favour of his son.19

Thurston's hard-dying hope that the elite would redeem itself appeared again in his attitude to the Roko Tui Naitasiri, Ratu Peni Tanoa. He had hoped Adi Arieta Kuila's three handsome sons would accept the restraints that government required in return for the precedence, power and opportunities for wealth which its bestowal of office imparted. Ratu Peni, Ratu Alifereti Ravulo and Ratu Timoci Qiolevu all wanted salaries and put in claims for rent-monies, but did not love administration's dull round. Thurston told Carew how Ratu Ravulo had called to ask permission to live with his mother's brother, Ratu Epeli, at Bau where life was sweeter than at upriver Navuso:

Do you know that during the X'mas orgies he and another got £80 out of the Provincial fund.!! The R.[oko] served out his liquor freely and in the end the provincial scribe after assaulting Mr Small - and calling Mr Langham a thief and whoremonger - was sent round here to the Lunatic Asylum.20

19 FCSO 94/4678.
20 Thurston to Carew, 30 January, Carew Papers.
Letters from Ratu Ravulo explained why he would feel more comfortable away from Navuso: people would not dig his garden or otherwise act in accordance with his rights after the custom of the land, 'and they keep at a distance from me as if I had done them some evil...'.\textsuperscript{21} As Thurston remarked soon afterwards to earnest Ratu Osea Tunivanua, if some chiefly families did not hold the position they should - who was to blame?

> It is to my mind that the people shall respect their Chiefs. But supposing a Chief steals the money of his people: makes them work for money which he takes; debauches their daughters and sisters; fornicates with their wives, & so on, will such people love & respect their Chief?\textsuperscript{22}

In fact his own friend Ratu Golea had done this and more, but times were changing - though again (in the Naitasiri case), old times in a sense were reasserting themselves. Outside Navuso the three brothers ruled in virtue of Bauan influence through Adi Arieta, and with her death this was removed. At Navuso itself there was social embarrassment. The Buli was their father's brother by a mother of lower status. He never doubted his inferiority to the high-born brother's enormously better-born sons, but had strong-minded offspring of his own. Made Buli in this uncle's place, Ratu Ravulo was replaced in 1894 by the uncle's son, Ro Yautiko Druma.

Yautiko must have smiled. It was on an anonymous complaint, tracked down to Yautiko, that Ratu Ravulo's elder brother Ratu Peni had first fallen into serious trouble in 1888. Ratu Peni had kept for himself all the iyau brought back from successive Bosevakaturaga. He had failed to divide the mats, maet, turtles and pigs with those who had made the canoes which, Roko of a wood-rich province, he had taken away to the bose in his turn. 'We are weary, Sir', said Yautiko to Thurston, 'of manufacturing iyau and receiving nothing in return.'\textsuperscript{23} Ratu Peni was exiled to Matuku for a year but

\textsuperscript{21} Ratu Alifereti Ravulo to Governor, 3 June 1889, FCSO 89/1618.
\textsuperscript{22} Minute 14 May 1889, FCSO 89/1218.
\textsuperscript{23} [Yautiko] to Governor, 26 June 1888, FCSO 88/1978.
could be sympathetically explained to the Colonial Office. He was 'a young, thoughtless, roistering native Chief' who found himself 'just entering upon the full vigour of manhood and overborne by an exceptional exuberance of life and spirits...'.

He was an unusually fine looking man, said Thurston. He appealed to fine women, for he carried off Ratu Timoci Tavanavanua's daughter the beautiful Adi Litia Cakobau. Having served his year at Matuku he was reinstated. Before another passed, Thurston had to exile him again for defalcation and rough ways with women. This time he went to Ono-i-Lau whence he reported, a little unctuously, that government appointments were despised and government work ignored on that distant island.

Thurston passed on what he said to Carew. There was personal news about the Cakobau and related families. Cakobau's daughter Adi Lusiana Qalikoro was visiting Ono with her strong-minded daughter Semivula:

Ratu Beni arrived all well at Ono and was recd by the Buli (who didn't know him) and given a house.

He had a long visit from Adi Lusiana and Semivula. He did not go much near them. But after a long discussion the Marama came to me formally asking my assent to a marriage between Semivula and Ratu Epeli (son of Namusadroka) the Native Officer in charge at Nasova. I said that provided the parties chiefly concerned desired it I was satisfied. In reply Lusiana informed me that - 'they two' desired it - and had settled the whole thing between themselves.

Whether it is good I venture not to say but it will certainly be to get the busy lady married.

Thurston had cause to worry about his own adopted son, Ratu Lala. Lala remained a target among missionaries and

24 Thurston to C.O., 25 August 1888, CO83/49; FCSO 88/2472.
25 FCSO: Deportation of Natives, 90/3804; Ratu Peni to Governor, 8 January 1889, FCSO 89/402.
26 Thurston to Carew, Monday Morning, Carew Papers.
magistrates. Feeling threatened by what Thurston saw as his highly successful adoption of European manners, they resented Ratu Lala's English speech, clothes and holidays in New Zealand. An efficient administrator, with a firm hand on his chiefs, he possessed his father's arbitrariness without Ratu Colea's personality. Ratu Lala liked to flog, and was not troubled about judicial procedure; the word went around that sooner or later his foster-father would have to take note of him.27 He fell foul of a new European Stipendiary Magistrate to Cakaudrove - bumptious Alexander Eastgate, an energetic, methodistical man with an eye to his own profit. Transferred from Ba where he had thought to line his pocket with proceeds from a wreck, he got Thurston into mildly ill odour with Downing Street for not dismissing him.28 He secretly rented a plantation for his brother from Sir William MacGregor,29 and was so much at home among Taveuni planters that according to Ratu Lala labourers called him 'the white men's magistrate'. War sprang up. On Eastgate's reports of men beaten by the Roko's younger brother Ratu Jone Antonio Rabici, Thurston ordered an inquiry. He had been with Ratu Lala the previous evening, he minuted on 26 April 1892, but had not then read these accusing papers: 'if the statements made are true I am both grieved and surprised'.30

At Ratu Lala's request, a commission inquired into the whole range of stories about him. Then re-inquiry was made after the resident Wesleyan missionary joined in with the charge that Ratu Lala's rough ways had induced a belief that the relationship between himself and the Governor precluded appeal. He was known as the Governor's son, one Fijian said. He had levied oppressively and been violent in his cups. He was suspended for a year. Still sneered at by Eastgate for his half-Fijian, half-European ways, he was defended by Thurston as 'an active and loyal man' who 'in the ordinary affairs of life conducts himself honourably'.31 Exiled to Colo West, and made sergeant of the detachment of Armed Native

27 E.G. Langham's letters to Worrall, MOM 295.
28 Minutes on Thurston to C.O., 12 August 1895, CO83/62; FCSO 95/4653.
29 See Taylor to MacGregor, 16 August 1886 (private), FCSO 86/1412; neither the lease nor MacGregor's ownership seems to have been registered.
30 FCSO 92/2094 (encl. in 92/1349).
31 FCSO 92/2281, 2475, 2594, 4133–4.
Constabulary stationed there so that Sergeant Wright could have leave, Ratu Lala was given permission to take his wife back to Somosomo for her confinement even though Thurston knew that adverse comment would result: 'I, under like circumstances, should make the same concession to any married Chief.'

He had many appeals from chiefs away on government business to be allowed to go home. Sometimes a man was exiled for the sake of peace at his home but could then be made useful - and conciliated personally - by being appointed a provincial scribe or native stipendiary magistrate in his place of banishment. It was so with Ratu Viliame Tunidau of Matuku. He lost his appointment as Buli Matuku after helping William Hennings' agent to make away with four tons of tax-copra. Replaced by his brother, or cousin, he remained a focus for disaffection, and was removed to Lakeba on the recommendation of the district council, then appointed Native Stipendiary Magistrate in Macuata. As Thurston commented, 'it is expedient to find employment for Ratu William.'

All that went awry in provincial centres generally was duplicated in the one where Thurston had once sat to discuss Cession - Bau. He went there on his tour of trouble spots in 1889. The upshot was a flock of appointees to lower rungs in the Fijian Administration who might, he hoped, provide the leadership lacking in their elders. Little was forthcoming from the Roko Tui Tailevu, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, cause of his visit. Ratu Epeli was pursuing his new god, money, by using his lala to ensure a supply of bananas to the traders. And he was at odds with some of his young chiefs. With help from the Buli Bau and Native Stipendiary Magistrate Ratu Jone Colata, Ratu Epeli ran his province very much to his own advantage. Offences vakavanua abounded, as did talaidredre charges. Money was freely borrowed from the provincial fund. And the young chiefs were ill-treated by these two seniors - although, as was proper, having regard to Ratu Epeli's rank, they instanced only the established reprobate Ratu Jone Colata, son of Ratu Ilaitia Toroca.

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32 FCSO 92/4262; 93/3987, Minute 21 September 1893.
33 Minute 30 July 1891, FCSO 90/1412; and see Ratu Viliame's depressing report on Macuata, 15 November 1891, 91/3891.
34 FCSO 89/480.
'If Sir! these are your instructions to him we shall not be able to bear them' - Thurston had been warned by Ratu Jope Naucabalavu in January 1889.\textsuperscript{35} He sent commissioners to enquire at Bau the next month. Bad blood emerged, especially between Ratu Jone and his half-brother Ratu Saimone Dobui. The incidence of chiefly levies were discussed, though not with direct complaint; and Ratu Saimone said that Ratu Epeli alone dared speak at meetings. Visiting Bau himself, Thurston told Ratu Epeli that he found some complaints trivial, others serious. Ratu Jone was suspended, but Ratu Epeli himself was ultimately responsible:

The complainants are loyal enough to you the Roko but times are changing and they will not endure being worried or oppressed by people who they know have no excuse for doing so.\textsuperscript{36}

In one part of Thurston's mind all this occasioned no surprise. He would rebuke subordinates who said that Ratu Lala, from his upbringing, was not 'in sympathy' with his people. What chief ever had been so? he would reply. The idea was absurd to any one who knew Fiji. Chiefs ruled by the strong arm.\textsuperscript{37} And yet he had hoped for more. Men were behaving like Samuel Johnson's Highlanders of 1755. 'When the power of birth and station ceases, no hope remains but from the prevalence of money', Johnson had declaimed. Fijian chiefs actually retained their power - in Ratu Epeli's and Ratu Peni's cases, power they might not have held in their own right. But still they were not satisfied.

Their dissatisfaction was, of course, in the nature of their situation. The exercise of birth-sanctioned power within limits prescribed by even a Fijian-speaking foreigner, a little man who quoted past events at them, reminded them of his services to their fathers and thumped his chest, required personal apologies and then warmly assured them he felt confident they would mind their manners - this was hardly power at all. It was not agreeable for Ratu Epeli to be constantly reminded of his debts, even though Thurston personally stood guarantor for an advance of salary to help pay them off.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{35}Quoted Carew and Hunter to Col. Sec., 20 February 1889, ibid.
\textsuperscript{36}Thurston to Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, 13 March 1889, ibid.
\textsuperscript{37}FCSO 93/4134.
\textsuperscript{38}FCSO 90/2451.
Nor was Ratu Jone Colata compensated by a succession of bracing assurances that even now he was a man of great ability whom Na Kena Vai, after so many years' acquaintance since Ratu Jone was a Lieutenant in Ratu Cakobau's army, still hoped to see redeem himself. It was more satisfying to keep what money one could out of the government's maw, dip into the provincial funds whenever possible, and pursue women. This at least was in the old chiefly tradition, and the gaol sentence which followed if relations laid charges was better than the club which might have descended in former days at Bau.

Bau in the 1890s was a depressing place. Once it had been vital, a base for marauding and ruling. Now it was a town of enforced idleness. Bau's bitterness became expressed in words a decade later when its chiefs faced up to the fact that lands over which their fathers had exercised suzerains' rights were registered in the occupants' names. Its spirit's decay showed in neglected houses and, some men said, perhaps a little oddly, in energy expended on other men's bed-mats. Lurid tales of Bauan sexual activity filled Fiji. For his part Thurston played them down, in the same way that he overlooked sins like fiddling in the account books. Financial misdemeanours were to be expected everywhere:

if they are not allowed to keep the [provincial] account as at present they will never learn to keep it right, and that is one of the objects, and one of the principal objects sought to be obtained by allowing the natives as far as possible to conduct their own affairs.

As for supposed promiscuity, he was inclined to think the Wesleyans' prohibition on tobacco was at least partly responsible:

one half of the young maramas who are sometimes supposed to be guilty of indiscretions with young fellows during the evening, simply get into obscure places in order to enjoy the luxury of a smoke.

39 Ratu Kadavulevu to Thurston, 19 August 1890, Government House Miscellaneous Papers.
40 Minute 27 April 1892, FCSO 92/1348.
41 Minute 31 August 1893, FCSO 93/2765.
Not all would have agreed with him — not Niko Rabuku, for one. He had moved from Lomaiviti to Bau as Magistrate and, writing piously to Thurston, reflected that he had tried to conduct himself with decorum in this place of young chiefs and chiefly ladies. Their example was all too sad in the eyes of a church elder like Niko.⁴² He had a case. Ratu Jone Colata was in and out of gaol at the behest of his wronged wife. And while the old intimate of Thurston, Filikese Balikewa, who was made Buli Bau in Ratu Jone's place was not tempted by the flesh, he did have obligations which were most readily met by dipping into the cash-box. Filikese's accusers were no better than he, Thurston reflected sadly as the charges duly rolled in, but the law must take its course. Sure enough, one of the honest men who accused Filikese was soon in trouble as result of information laid by his fellow official and townsman, Niko.⁴³

A factious, envious people — this was the Fijians' image of themselves. They tended to live up to it. Ratu Jope Naucabalavu and Ratu Saimone Dobui left Bau for office in other provinces. They found their hosts uncivil, complained to and were complained about at the Provincial Office. And Ratu Jone Colata, falling foul of Ratu Epeli too, set about building an anti-establishment power structure at Bau by introducing Roman Catholic priests into that Wesleyan stronghold.⁴⁴ He did not manage it, but the fact that it was worthwhile to make the attempt showed that a sea-change was occurring in the despised Marist Mission. The Catholics had acquired a Bishop, a rival to the Governor.

⁴² Niko to Thurston, 8 July 1891, FCSO 91/2104.
⁴³ FCSO 90/2284, 3736, 91/2104.
⁴⁴ E.g., Rougier to Vidal, 12 November 1895, Correspondence relating to Native Affairs, Archdiocese of Suva Archives.
'Quite in the old style'

'Fiji is indeed my land', said Thurston at his installation. There was overriding identification in the thought, and a degree of possession also. This persisted whether he was at his desk with the telephone bringing requests for instruction on, say, a question of precedence in Natewa Bay; or whether he was in the rara at Vunidawa while warriors performed a club meke. Drinking down the Governor's yaqona, he felt it was the Supreme Chief's too. Honours like qaloqalovi were anomalous if given to Europeans but could properly be received by the man who, if he knew his business, governed by Fijian assent. He convinced guests like La Farge that his grand manner was essential to personal government - and that chiefly honours should be paid to no other European, not even to the new Vicar Apostolic, styled Bishop, who was pressing the Colonial Office for concessions in the same month Thurston was installed.

_Fiji is my land_ - but Bishop Julien Vidal believed it was God's and meant to offer it up where it rightfully belonged. Vidal was ten years younger than Thurston, and had all his vigour. Bred in a French anti-clerical climate, he quite expected to find, and was willing to fight, anti-clericalism in Fiji. Fresh from Samoa where every man flew his own flag and played politics freely, Vidal had been promoted to Fiji with the task of revitalising the oppressed Marist Mission. His fellow priests told him how much it needed the balm, the consolation, the dear fruit of the Virgin's tears. With a touch of blasphemy, they even warned him his mitre must prove a crown of thorns, fenced round by heresy as he would be;

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1Thurston's minute for Fuller, 2 August 1895, CO83/61.
2La Farge, _Reminiscences_, 438-9; and see FCSO 90/658, record of interview between Thurston and Vidal.
but God would repay. He would rise closer to his Lord, be bound ever more fondly to Him on that so-glorious cross, through the travails he must undergo in leading Wesleyans to the true Church.  

Secular help was not to be despised. Marists had always seen warships as a legitimate means of arguing with Islanders. And Vidal maintained an endearingly quaint faith in the nonexistent influence of his 'cher Duc de Norfolk'. He brought an introduction from this Catholic peer to the Colonial Office, along with a list of requirements which Sir Charles Mitchell, to whom they were shown before being sent to Thurston, preceded him in thinking likely to provoke brisk reaction from the Wesleyan chiefs. A great builder, Vidal wanted to turn leasehold land titles into freeholds, the better to secure those white concrete churches in French provincial style which he believed should testify to his faith among the coconut palms. He assured the Colonial Office that the dear Fijians wished it too, so anxious were they to advance Catholic interests which of course were true Fijian interests also.

His church was *lotu kaisi*. It had run down under gentle Bréheret, who now in his old age ached to see it recover before he should toddle off upwards to make his quiet account. Vidal inherited an emptiness. There were no regular meetings of the eight Marists then in the colony, each of whom was isolated in his bare little station with a handful of communicants and a few schoolchildren. There were no retreats, no crosses on churches even, so as not to attract attention. Several churches were in decay, their congregations gone to Wesley. The angelus was never heard even at Levuka or Suva. All this must change when the Bishop brought Saint Peter's keys and — as Thurston sneered privately, with some revulsion the Marists' repainted banner of the Sacred Heart. The Bishop must assuredly receive a grant of land at the capital for a

3 E.g., Forrestier to Vidal, 16 May 1887, Letters to Mgr Vidal, Archdiocese of Suva Archives.

4 Vidal to C.O., 16 May 1888, and Mitchell to C.O., 25 May 1888 CO83/49; Thurston to C.O., 12 November 1888, ibid.

5 Bréheret to Vidal, 6 July 1887, Letters to Vidal.

6 See, e.g., APM OF 411: 'Correspondence de Mgr Vidal avec l'Adm.-Général'.

house to which, as Christ's Vicegerent, he would be conducted in procession, after being swum ashore in the manner so far accorded only to great chiefs and Governors. If Vidal was to uplift his church, he must be aggressive and proselytize. He did so from the moment of his arrival with his eleven new priests, each of whom was also seeking a crown. One was eager young Père Emmanuel Rougier who signed himself Vidal's 'Benjamin'- and was to bring sorrow to his admired leader by an apostasy which saw him end as a businessman in French Polynesia.7

Ardent, plain-speaking Anglophobe French peasants, the new priests were in general. Eager to see the City of God brought to earth, in villages of the Catholic faithful separated from the hideous heretikos, they were peevishly affronted by obstacles thrown up by the Wesleyan phalanx. Fijians may have cared little for doctrine but they knew a threat to the established order. And they could call on the Governor's support. How unctuously the priests called for liberty, Thurston reflected - and how little they would permit if their City ever appeared on earth! Communication with them was difficult for Fijians and some of his English staff, though not for him whose French was good. The priests had little English, and some were slow to learn Fijian.

They were not slow to act, though. Vidal wanted a freehold grant for land at Tokou on Ovalau where Fijians had voluntarily given a lease for a school, he said. He sent a substantial new wooden church to Nakasaleka, Kadavu, ready-framed for erection on a yawu where once the Catholics had taken communion in a thatch house. Meeting opposition from Buli Nakasaleka, he raced for protection to Government House, crying punishment upon the persecutors. There he was ill-treated in small glasses of Bordeaux by a little tyrant, a parvenue hated in local European society, who recited to him all the clogging laws against European encroachment which obtained in this benighted colony, with the promise that he - 'Sir Thurston', as the Bishop called him - would see them

7Rougier to Vidal, 22 November 1887, Correspondence with Government and others re Native Affairs 1883-1884, Archdiocese of Suva Archives; and see the file of letters from Rougier to Vidal 1906-7, especially 'Patre Manuelle' to Mme Katerina Biaukula, 2 November 1932, ibid.
Catholic aggression and Wesleyan backlash were Thurston's problem, his personal aversion to all purveyors of a one, true, proselytizing and punitive faith apart. And unlike the Bishop, he knew his facts when it came to village politics. Buli Nakasaleka was stopping the rebuilding because the yavu involved belonged to a one-time Catholic family which had now turned Wesleyan. There was debateable need for a substantial permanent church in a community that contained only a bare handful of Catholics; one of them – quite typically – was a former Wesleyan teacher who had come over to the lotu katolika after falling out with his missionary in the lotu dina.

Good reasons to Buli Nakasaleka and Thurston for deprecating a renewal of Catholic onslaught, these facts meant nothing to Vidal. It was enough that a larger Catholic community had once existed at Nakasaleka. His tactics must necessarily be to break the Wesleyan phalanx by developing bridgeheads like this one.9 Wherever there was disaffection in a community, priests and catechists proselytized with a vigour intensified by memories of true faith's past humiliations in Fiji. No less vigorous was the response from Wesleyans entrenched in the provincial governments. Not for nothing had men like Jonacane Dabea and Josefa Tawaki sucked their milk of education from Navuloa; even men of rank and sin like Ratu Vuki (now deceased) found something worthwhile in the faith propagated by Frederick Langham. Nothing wrong with the faith, Ratu Vuki had said; only with the white men who propagated it.10 Like the Fijian Administration, the lotu dina was absorbed into the life of the land. And that life was directly affected by the Bishop, who forbade his flock to help build Wesleyan chapels even though Wesleyans assisted Catholics with their churches. He went further, in little things; he ordered Catholic children to leave the Society of Good Templars and had even forbidden one boy to

8Vidal to Under-Secretary of State, 15 December 1889, CO83/53; and APM OF 411, passim; see, also, Vidal's correspondent Fr Thomas to Cardinal Manning, 7 August 1891, Manning Papers.

9FCSO 88/1826; Thurston to C.O., 12 November 1888, CO83/49.

10Bosevakaturaga, 1880.
light the lamp at the Mechanics Institute.\textsuperscript{11}

Catholic exclusiveness was exquisitely unacceptable to Thurston. He saw Fijians as their own people first, devotees of Western religions a long way second. Religion was potentially a divisive force. Where one side was entrenched, let the other keep out. Otherwise there would be procession and counter-demonstration, with the probable outcome the breaking of heads. Then cries of 'persecution' would come from the Catholics – which really only meant that the complainant wanted his own way in interfering with other people. Thurston felt very much for Buli Namalata, who put the view of Wesleyan provincial administrators: before the Bishop came both parties lived quietly, helpfully, together; now the Bishop interfered, and the Catholics were speaking ill of all authority but his. Only the fact that no great chief was a Catholic, able, and indeed from his position, obliged to use his authority against the heretikos, kept the two sides from fighting, in this Buli's opinion. As things stood, the 'Catholics speak and behave insolently, but they are low born people and we endure it because their words have no weight'.\textsuperscript{12}

When Père Flaus came back from an unauthorised visit into Colo West, horrified at the vakamisioneri, full of resentment at the subordinate position held there by his church and determined that a good lesson must be given the persecutors, Thurston reflected that Flaus was himself eminently possessed of a persecuting spirit. He declined Vidal's requests to show his own impartiality by behaving as a local Duke of Norfolk.\textsuperscript{13} It was not the Governor's part to punish Fijians who used hard words against an intruding faith, though he might counsel self-restraint. When officials were complained of, he recalled that they were chiefs by descent and government representatives only by appointment. He sympathised with their resentment when a priest detached part of a community, divided the land and took people away to his station for instruction over long periods. The main function of religion

\textsuperscript{11}Thurston to Brown, 10 February 1889, Brown Papers.

\textsuperscript{12}Thurston's minute, 29 November 1888, FCSO 89/2981; Buli Namalata's statement 19 April 1890, 90/1061.

\textsuperscript{13}Stewart to Vidal, 28 January 1891, Correspondence...re Native Affairs, on draft by Thurston, FCSO 91/311; and see 91/1066.
was to serve as a social bond, Thurston agreed with Buli Wailevu. When this Buli frankly confessed that he had ordered his people to become Wesleyan, Thurston had it explained to Vidal that he found the Fijian's explanation more compelling than the Bishop's demand that he be punished. Buli Wailevu urges in extenuation that formerly he and all Chiefs and people along his coast were Wesleyans, that after a certain war the High Chief Ratu Golea became a Catholic and compelled them also to become Catholic, and that after many years he (the Buli) and a great many others returned to their original Church: That the Catholic teachers, are for the most part, pushing interfering fellows, that they set themselves to alienate the minds and love of the people from the chiefs, create discord, and seek to bring the rule of the people into the hands of the European Catholic Missionaries.

In reply the Governor tells the Buli that he has done a wrong and must undo it; that his explanations, even if all true, are no answer and that he must practise patience and toleration, and not seek to redress his own grievances. This must suffice.14

The Catholic Mission's success depended upon its supporting men disenchanted with the status quo.15 If a Wesleyan teacher fell out with his missionary or a commoner felt his chief was arbitrary (or if Ratu Jone Colata was aggrieved by the Governor), an easy and effective way to express resentment was to join the Catholics. Perhaps you then offered them a piece of land which was not within your exclusive power to offer (or if you were Ratu Jone, tried to get a chapel built on Bau); and then the Bishop was aggrieved because under law he could not accept this spontaneous gift.

Thurston had old Père Trouillet from Rotuma in his office with Vidal in October 1888, wanting to build more chapels and wondering why government had not yet finished surveying the Mission's Rotuma lands. Not too many more chapels should go

14 Stewart to Bertreux, 25 March 1891, ibid.
15 Thurston to C.O., 12 November 1888, CO83/49.
up than the island needed, Thurston hoped in return - and felt
inwardly that the power the Mission had acquired through
its possession of a good deal of land 'spontaneously offered'
was not much to Rotuma's temporal interest. 16 In Fiji he
blamed himself over the Tokou land. Years before, because
it was wanted for a school, Thurston had helped Bréheret
acquire a lease from Ratu Epeli. The chief had been irritated
over the Mission's possession of land elsewhere and had had
to be talked round. 17 Thurston regretted his intervention
as he saw the nearby village dominated by the Mission, all
secular life sucked out of it. 18 Even so, he was still
receptive to personal approaches from Bréheret; the old man
continued asking for favours even while he was querulously
assuring Vidal that Thurston, hitherto well-disposed to the
Marists, had become haughty and distant once made Governor.19

Thurston was actually more relaxed once he occupied
Government House in his own right. He freely sought opinion,
equally freely explaining his reasons when he disagreed. It
was simply that his tolerance of interlopers who came to
relieve their psychoses upon Islanders did not increase. 'I
have known a Priest...order Roman Catholic villagers to build
their Bure ni Vulagi [guest house] outside the limits of their
town, so that the hated Wesleyans (probably close tribal
relations) should not come within their sight or hearing....' 20
He could not forget the wounds of his Rotuman friend Riamkau,
killed by Wesleyans. When Catholics complained they were
persecuted, his view was that a natural lively zeal for the
Church made priests fretful about small things; 21 but their
manner irritated him and the Bishop's pretensions touched
him on the raw. He probably did tell Père Jolly, Marist
Visitor from Sydney, that Vidal wanted to sit in the Governor's
chair. 22 Vidal was very different from old Catholic Bishops

16 Idem; FCSO 90/2228.
17 See the 1884 correspondence in FCSO 88/3248.
18 Thurston to C.O., 12 November 1888, CO83/49.
19 Vidal to Under-Secretary, 15 December 1889, CO83/53; APM
OF 411, passim; Bréheret-Thurston correspondence of
November 1892, Correspondence...re Native Affairs.
20 Thurston to C.O., 15 August 1896, CO83/64.
21 Minute 26 August 1890, FCSO 90/2228.
22 Vidal to Under-Secretary, 15 December 1889, CO83/53.
he had known from Samoa. When the visiting French warship Volta fired Vidal a salute in October 1889, he made Vidal lower the tricolour he had hoisted over his house. Nor did he find it courteous of the Bishop to fly the British ensign on his boat below the Marist banner.23

Given that the obsessive streak in his nature was as large as the Bishop's, he could not remain neutral when his Fijian callers included parents complaining that their children were held prisoner in the Bishop's schools. He interviewed an Ovalau woman in early 1889. Her eleven-year-old daughter was happily at Loreto School, Tokou, but the mother suddenly discovered a need for her about the house, perhaps being urged to this discovery by Josefa Tawaki. Thurston thought the mother's will should prevail, despite Vidal's piteously bewailing the girl's departure.24 However good Catholic education might be, which in the end he doubted, believing that Vidal regarded ignorance as the mother of devotion, Thurston disapproved of their boarding system: 'let the Mission take the School to the children and not transport the children to the School and keep them immured there...'.25 And he disliked priests preying upon orphans, as he saw it. Fijian society was organized to take care of the bereaved, who should certainly not, if they were girls, be secluded in nunneries. He agreed with the Bosevakaturaga:

Instead of these young women being at their homes assisting their parents, or getting married they are uselessly immured under Priestly domination wasting and idling their time in the mimicry of an institution they are unable to comprehend.26

And so there were lively times in his Fiji. Another window opened upon Fijian discontents. Like Ratu Jone Colata, Ratu Avarosa, long-disgraced hereditary Roko Tui Suva, went over to the Catholics. So did some young Bau chiefs who could see no future for themselves in government - 'princes', the

23 Thurston to Brown, 10 February 1889, Brown Papers; FCSO 93/1761.
24 FCSO 89/311.
25 Thurston to C.O., 15 August 1896, CO83/64.
26 Idem.
romantic Vidal liked to call them, provoking derision. There was a trickle of people to the Catholic schools. They may have genuinely wanted education. Their administrators insisted they sought to avoid tax and communal work. An eloping couple left Qaliyalatina with Père Lezer but were glad enough to be sent home after an interview with Thurston. They took back his instructions that if there was no real impediment to their marrying, as they assured him, they should be free to do it. No objection existed to their becoming Catholic, only to their being taken from their home by any European - priest or planter - without consent of their family and Buli. When one Alvisio Tabuyalewa complained that he was persecuted for his religion, Thurston wrote back that if - as he believed, but would inquire - this meant Alvisio was not allowed to live with a priest but was summoned back to his village, then no persecution was involved. As Governor, he was there to protect Alvisio, he said, and would do so. There was a distinction between things of the spirit and things of the land, though, and in these latter he would allow no priest to interfere.

This was highly personal government, and, coupled with his organic view of Fijian society which made every individual inseparable from his mataqali and tied every mataqali to a district, it meant rigidity for Fijians so long as he ruled. What he felt justified him was to be seen in parts of Cakaudrove. Here, as on Ovalau around Loreto, villages were being sucked dry of life, houses let fall into ruin, while people went off to mission stations to learn the duties of a good Catholic and dived for bèche-de-mer in order to make a church into a cathedral. Above all he wanted to avoid the separation of Catholic from Wesleyan villages which the priests were so anxious to effect. Even segregation by faith in the same village would be to break up the social condition of the people which he thought so well suited to them.

Since he had virtually no coercive power - 'the Autocrat has not much executive force behind him', he mocked Vidal - Thurston depended on consent, which might be withdrawn if the Wesleyan chiefly stalwarts became too offended. Fiji was a land of latent violence - and a chapel was burned in the

27 Idem; APM OF 411, passim.
28 FCSO 89/2933, 3210.
29 Thurston to Alvisio Tabuyalewa, 12 June 1894, FCSO 94/3448.
30 Thurston to C.O., 15 August 1896, CO83/64.
Yasawas. It was a country of rumours in which the wish was often father to the thought - and he had to track down a story that he had said if Mr Langham put his heretical head through the door of a certain convert of Père Rougier's again, the man would be justified in clubbing it. It was a land of jealous chiefs - and Thurston found it difficult not to sympathise with brash young Ratu Peni Tanoa in an episode of 1889.31

Ratu Peni had ordered a new house for the Wesleyan teacher at Navuso, whereupon Père Passant went up to demand Ratu Peni exempt the Catholics, and fell out with the chief:

I hear that he has said the French Priest threatened him with a 'Man o War'. This would be quite in the old style but hardly consistent with the present day. The alleged answer was 'Man o war - Look - if it was not for the English Flag I'd put you in a lovo.'32

Lovo - earth-ovens - for men were not long cold in Fiji. In the hills of Viti Levu some of the priests were looking towards Tuka adherents as potential converts. For their part these Bai Tabua had not yet given up hope that ovens might yet receive all those ungodly, European or Fijian, who did not recognise the two lords Nacirikaumoli and Nakausabaria.

31 FCSO 89/2956, 2970, 3048, 3237, 3257, 3345.

32 Thurston to Carew, 3 November 1889, Carew Papers.
Chapter 17

'The spirits entered the body of the priest'

By the beginning of 1891 prayers of the Bai Tabua had been filtering into Government House long enough for Thurston to feel it was time he made another inland progress. Tuka was stirring again. In 1886 Thurston had ordered one of Navosavakadua's lieutenants back to his home in Ra from the headquarters of the cult which he had established at Udu in Muaia. Now this man, Rokoleba, had made Udu a cult centre again. Hair was cut short as in Navosavakadua's day. Graves of dead chiefs were stamped upon to raise their occupants, who would then join in overturning the world. There were renewed invocations across the yaqona bowl. Members of priestly mataqali came back into their own. Accepting the yaqona on behalf of Nacirikaumoli and Nakausabaría, as the yaqona of Tuka - Life - they dedicated the land to the twins in the name of their votaries, the Bai Tabua or sacred fence who in this world protected the gods. There were promises of immortality for the votaries when the twins should return, along with a well-equipped store for each man; and broad hints that unbelievers would not relish their end. Fijians would run mad, according to one version. Europeans would be driven out of the country.¹

The specific torments to which the ungodly in Suva had subjected Navosavakadua - putting him through the rollers of a sugar-mill, for example - showed the influence of European secular society, which these inland people knew from the standpoint of indentured labourers on the coast. Navosavakadua reported his sufferings after the nightly yaqona drinking at Udu, when Rokoleba would hear the rattle of an anchor chain in a deep pool as Navosavakadua's ship came home from Rotuma. One more ordeal he had to suffer, beneath a piledriver, and then his triumphant final return would be the signal for chastisement of unbelievers. Some district officials thought it

¹ FCSO 91/1133, 1440, 1471, 1546, 1852, 2344.

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well to hedge bets by offering *yaqona* to the priests.\(^2\)

How far *Tuka* was dangerous Thurston was less sure than his European subordinates inland, Carew and Joske. It certainly meant that orders were not obeyed, though, tax *yaqona* drunk and girls debauched freely, though not necessarily unwillingly. Local unbelievers, like the Wesleyan teacher who at last with great courage denounced Rokoleba before the District Court, were in danger. In the parts of Ra that were affected, Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi found his administration blocked and looked to Thurston for support. And the waters of Colo were troubled enough for Catholics to fish in. Going inland in July 1891, Thurston was not overjoyed to be shown a letter which Père Rougier had lately sent to *Tuka* votaries from the 1885 outbreak as they were going home from gaol. Rougier's letters elsewhere show that he felt he was the general in a holy war.\(^3\)

'All he wants is converts', Thurston summed him up, 'at any cost to other people or the peace of the country.' Rougier regarded these *Tuka* dissidents as the potential nucleus of a congregation:

...he begs them not to listen to their Buli - to be 'yaloturaga' ['big-minded'] & not afraid. He wish[es] 'na bula kei na cegu' [health and rest] - 'Cegu' from whom? Inferentially the Government -

He tells me the people of Nasoqo & neighbourhood districts desire to become Catholic but, in effect, are afraid of me....

It is quite evident to me that if I do not order him to keep out of Colo we shall have to contend with the 'odium theologicum' as well as other worries.\(^4\)

As Thurston explained to the Colonial Office, Rougier was asking these *Tuka* votaries to turn from a nominal Wesleyanism to an equally nominal Catholicism. This would be a harmless,

\(^{2}\)Ibid.

\(^{3}\)FCSO 91/2877; Rougier to Vidal, 27 November 1889, Correspondence...re Native Affairs, Archdiocese of Suva Archives.

\(^{4}\)Thurston to Carew, 'Sunday Night', Carew Papers.
even proper invitation, were it not for circumstances the priest ignored:

To instruct Semi-savages to pay no heed to their Chief, who is their Chief only because he, in their innermost hearts, is the connecting link between them and their ancestral spirits may on the surface seem to the zealous missionary quite right, but to the Governor, who has to deal with and keep in order a number of mountain tribes who but for the established Government would soon revert to murder and cannibalism, the proceeding presents other aspects, and especially so when the actual Executive force at the Governor's command is entirely a native one.5

Rougier had also written to their head, the Buli Bobouco himself, Thurston found. The priest subsequently complained that Buli Bobouco had replied temporising, saying on the one hand he did not want his people divided, on the other he was anyway lower in precedence than neighbours who must go over to Catholicism first. Thurston answered grimly that Rougier would have done well to send his own original letter too. Thurston had recovered it from Colo. It contained a covert threat, in a promise to withdraw friendship, and would naturally be seen by the Buli as a promise of trouble.6 Buli Bobouco had trouble enough. He was soon in gaol on a charge of vakatubuca, spreading evil reports - the usual charge for Tuka. His successor was perhaps worse off. He had the Governor in person on his doorstep.

A remote doorstep at Vuniwaiwaivula village, it was approached up a boulder-strewn stream-bed between precipitous basalt cliffs.7 Thurston thought it one of the most difficult walks he had ever made. He could still scramble pleasurably through such country at fifty-five, with a keen eye to the evidence of volcanic uplift in the rock - and the breath to point it out. He went, as in 1886, with a picnic air. His brother-in-law John Berry came, to choose a cool eminence as

5Thurston to C.O., 19 October 1893, CO83/57.
6FCSO 91/2877.
7Thurston to C.O., 12 August 1891, CO83/54 (quotations from copy at FCSO 14/6625); and see ex-Buli Bobouco to Thurston, 12 December 1893, FCSO 93/4264.
site for both a new police post and a sanitarium. So did Adams and La Farge, charmed with 'our Sir John's' undertaking to show them 'the ancient haunts of Fijian civilisation' in the legend-ridden Kauvadra. He amused Adams with his procession:

Sir John travels like Stanley in Africa. We have certainly a hundred and fifty native carriers and attendants, who are strung out in a long line, winding across the river and round the gorges, as picturesque as if they were on the war-path.8

If there was anything picturesque about a warpath, it had escaped Thurston when he campaigned with the Bauans in country like this twenty-four years before. He went now to ensure that he never need tread it again. He was showing that government was stronger than the old gods. He did it face to face, by measured speech and threat all about.9 Force of personality was all he had. Among his entourage, most of it men from the surrounding country who came in to enjoy the fun (some of them policemen, it is true), there were only four armed constables from Suva under their commanding officer, Ratu Namusadroka's son, Ratu Epeli Vakacaracara, with some of his non-commissioned subordinates.

If the Tuka votaries had ever wanted to make a resounding declaration, they missed their chance now. Instead, they submitted to Thurston's lecturing. He did not stint it. The Udu people were required to remember how, as he said, he had thrashed them with the old government's troops for their 1874 raids on newly-Christian neighbours. In fact that thrashing had more directly been administered by James Harding, soon to be on the verge of suicide after embezzling money from his latest employers, the Suva Town Board. Nonetheless, Thurston lives in the minds of the Udu descendants as the only Governor who ever penetrated to them, a man of decision, and tough - 'Tamata Kaukauwa'. Stumbling on to Vuniwaiwaivula, he photographed a bure kalou, a temple, on its outskirts, built high on a fine yawu as befitted a house for the gods. He would have burnt it by way of showing who really ruled in this land, but for the danger of the fire's spreading to the unusually

3 Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, 16 June and 2 July 1891, Letters of Henry Adams, ed. Ford, 491 and 495.

9 See, e.g., his rebuke to the Ba Provincial Scribe, 28 March 1892, FCSO 96/3359.
substantial town nearby. Instead, he cut down a small basket hanging from the rooftree by strings whose number corresponded with the number of Mataqalis or family divisions of the qali or tribe. The heathen priest always sat under this basket and the ancestral spirits of each Mataqali were believed to come down their respective strings and meet in the basket. From the basket the spirits entered the body of the priest as soon as he had worked himself up to the necessary point of ecstasy.10

At Nasoqo, further up the ravine, he interviewed such a priest - Rokoleba himself. This lieutenant of Navosavakadua had built another bure katou at Nasoqo. He received letters of instruction from his ancestral spirit, and admitted to getting some from Navosavakadua too:

He would not tell me how he received these latter letters but those who appeared to know him best declared that according to his own account he went out at night upon the hill tops and caught upon the point of a bayonet the letters as they were borne down upon the wind. At other times the letters were brought by birds.11

A flogging administered by the sergeant of police should do somewhat, Thurston felt, to convince the assembly that Rokoleba was a cheat - though in later years the sergeant's people felt it proper, or were forced, to atone for the flogging. And Tuka votaries, continuing to practise in secret, never doubted their day would come. Unbelievers would die under the club while the votaries would live on for ever. So the prayers continued to be uttered over yaqona to Nakausabaria and Nacirikaumoli - prayers for their return, that all but the votaries should perish and foreigners be driven out of the land, and their diseases with them. As one prayer ran:

I give to you the Lords of the Kauvadra this yaqona - All of you drink it - That we the Bai may be cared for - That we be preserved through

10Thurston to C.O., 12 August 1891, loc.cit.
11Idem.
it - That we may not be attacked by influenza.
Let us be preserved in health.¹²

For some years after Thurston's visit all was done secretly, for he laid a hoe to the tap-root by giving the Drau-ni-ivi people a few weeks in which to prepare for mass exile in Kadavu. It was from Drau-ni-ivi that a tabua had been passed along the hills with the prayer that 'we may be of one mind, that the Government be overthrown, and the Tuka flourish',¹³ and Thurston was determined Navosavakadua's village should never be reoccupied. Even so, interviewing practisers of the luveniawai magical rites when they arrived in Suva gaol, he reflected that they were, after all, only youths looking for excitement.¹⁴ And on his tour in the hills, notwithstanding his recognition that young men made invulnerable by luveniawai might seek to test their imperviousness to a bullet, or Tuka votaries hasten the day when the twin gods should rule, by killing the Governor, he never gave up his picnic air.

Something of his manner was again recorded by Adams - his interviewing the Acting Buli Bobouco, 'whom he threatened to hang and shoot and burn if he didn't make his people behave themselves', while the Buli 'defended himself with great dignity'. He said his people were at fault, not he, reported Thurston, who took that with a grain of salt. The American guests were put aboard the Clyde at Tavua only to be awakened at six next morning 'by Sir John coming aboard with twenty or thirty followers' in that grand style he found so congenial.¹⁵

It extended outside Fiji to the Western Pacific.

¹³ Joske's minute 18 June 1891, FCSO 91/1862.
¹⁴ Thurston's minute 8 January 1894, FCSO 93/2939.
¹⁵ Adams to Elizabeth Cameron, 2 July 1891, Letters, 497 and 505-6; Thurston to C.O., 12 August 1891, loc.cit.
Chapter 18

'Deported-imprisoned-fined-shot'

A world of schooners and islands, the Western Pacific, high islands brooded beneath rain-clouds, low atolls broiled under the equatorial sun. Schooners beat up from them for Queensland, Fiji, Samoa and New Caledonia with labour-recruits at the pumps to keep the water down as it seeped through crazy seams. Island trading schooners crawled through reef passages to exchange tobacco, calico and tools for copra.

A few white men commanded these schooners because the island world held them in thrall or they could get employment in no other trade. Others lived ashore for the same reasons, as traders in the Gilbert, Ellice and Solomon Islands, traders and planters in the New Hebrides - where Anglo-French rivalry gave spice to what was otherwise a monotonous if brilliantly coloured existence - or as merchants and small-time politicians in the Polynesian Kingdoms of Tonga and Samoa.

The Western Pacific was a world of kings in Samoa and Tonga, head-hunters in New Georgia, yam-planters and pig-farmers in the New Hebrides who put their marks to deeds selling whole coastlines in return for alcohol and arms, and another king on Abemama in the Gilbert Islands who lived with a houseful of Brummagem ware and a schooner of his own sinking on its moorings in the lagoon.

The major kings were in a bad way in 1888 when Thurston returned as Grand Panjandrum of the Western Pacific. Malietoa was still exiled from Samoa. His rival, Tamasese, was on Mulinu'u Point to receive Thurston that year when he arrived at Apia to investigate events since the German coup. Tamasese was a German puppet - 'a mere ill-favoured truculent looking figure head'. Recognised de facto by the Treaty Powers, his government was conducted by a German colonial official, Eugen Brandeis. The Germans were not very subtle: 'it was not hidden from me - that the de facto Government of Samoa was centred in the German Consul and Mr Brandeis'.

1Thurston to Hervey, 26 October 1888 (private), FO58/240.
Theirs was an overly efficient government with an exaggerated commercial ethic. Samoans were being effectively taxed for the first time - and to the D.H.P.G's indirect benefit. Failing coin, mortgages were taken over land, entitling the D.H.P.G. to take copra with priority over other traders' existing claims. Brandeis personally seemed worthy of support to the extent of Queen's Regulations, which Thurston issued under the Western Pacific Orders in Council, forbidding Samoa's few score British residents to bathe naked at Apia, ride furiously along Beach Street or discharge ballast into the harbour - that ill-protected anchorage where vessels rode insecurely in the hurricane season. The regime itself, though, was too closely bound to D.H.P.G. interests to be comfortable for Samoans or any foreign residents not German. Its mortgage scheme was iniquitous, he told the Foreign Office. It would alienate from Samoans even land they had not already signed away.  

When the Germans imprisoned a pastor for giving W. & A. McArthur & Co. copra from tax-mortgaged land - manifest dishonesty, Brandeis thought it, though the debt to McArthurs pre-dated the tax - Thurston defended the Samoan by arguing that this was an attack on British trade, which earned him particular censure from Bismarck. McArthurs had equal rights with D.H.P.G. under international treaty, yet only very reluctantly would Thurston himself have registered mortgages like these German-inspired ones or imprisoned defaulters on McArthurs' behalf. So he rebuked Brandeis. That got the pastor released. Unless the Treaty Powers intervened against this 'iniquitous tax and land mortgage scheme' - Thurston told London - it would keep Samoans everlastingly 'shackled to the pedlars trade chest'.  

Cumbrous bureaucracies, divergent interests and distance slowed the Treaty Powers' reactions. The initiative was left with the Samoans. On 12 September 1888 they drove Tamasese out of Apia. Under the leadership of Mata'aafa Josefo, third member in their socio-political hierarchy, they showed a unity they had never displayed under Tamasese or the deported Malietoa. Mata'aafa had unusual legitimacy. He straddled both lineages. Their members had been outraged by German-engineered attempts to secure for Tamasese titles to which he had no  

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2 His despatches are in FO 58/239 and 240.

3 Thurston to Hervey, 26 October 1888 (Private), F058/240.
legitimate claim. As Thurston put it to Downing Street, Samoans had been

deported - imprisoned - fined - shot - and
now, finding death preferable to such a life, the native has risen and very properly risen against a state of affairs which in a private note I may characterise as brutal. 4

Officially he was equally explicit: there could be no end to Samoan dissatisfaction so long as Germany tried to hold the group commercially as well as politically. 5 McArthurs could go hang with their claim for damage done by German shellfire to their mortgage-land around Satupaitea village, he felt. The really serious aspect of German warships' bombardment of Mata'a'afa's supporters, the one he wanted the Foreign Office to do something about in Berlin, was 'the high-handed manner in which the independence of the Satupaitea people was interfered with...'. 6 German crudeness demolished his feeling that Germany had the best claim to rule Samoa. Talking with Rear-Admiral Fairfax fresh from an Apia bristling with warships, he could find no easy way to peace:

The recognition of Mata'a'afa or the restoration of Malietoa would probably restore quietness - But that alone will not suffice to effect a lasting settlement. If Germany is to be trusted by the other Powers concerned to create peace, she must begin by creating a wilderness or by changing her tactics towards native and other nationals than her own. 7

June 1889 found him back at Apia to hold another post-mortem, this time into events following the Germans' disaster of December 1888 when a landing-party from their squadron had been cut to pieces. Nature then interrupted the work of man. In February-March 1889 such a hurricane, as Governor of a copra-colony, Thurston dreaded, had wrecked his own Taveuni plantation before scattering the warships at Apia. 8

4 Idem.
5 Thurston to C.O., 25 October 1888 (print), F058/240.
6 Thurston to F.O., 25 October 1888, FC58/240.
7 Thurston to Hervey, 26 October 1888 (private), F058/240.
8 Thurston to Emily Burrows, 12 February 1889, Burrows Papers.
Four - German and American - lay sunk or ashore when he arrived; only H.M.S. Calliope had steamed clear into the wind's eye. Thurston came to consider German allegations that the British Consul and Deputy Commissioner, Colonel de Coetlogen, had assisted in defeating the landing-party. De Coetlogen had shown red lights to warn Mata'afa of its approach, had made his Consulate a rallying point for the rebels, and so forth - no one charge of which Thurston left officially on its feet. Privately he may have reflected that the old soldier must have been hard put to stay neutral between the new Consul-General, Herr Knappe, and Mata'afa. A man who combined charisma with dignity of descent, the Samoan leader was as much a hero to Thurston as to Samoans. They would have given a hot reception to German reinforcements, Thurston felt - and he would have applauded them.⁹

Here were Consul-General Knappe's 'just and philanthropic' efforts to teach Samoans 'the way to be happy', as his proclamations ran, by force.¹⁰ Here were equally bland assurances of pacific intent in the Reichstag. And here were actions in direct contrast. Arriving in December 1888, Knappe had immediately determined on a bold stroke. He had launched an attempt to recover Apia and disarm Mata'afa, and been caught napping. After the Samoan victory, said Thurston, 'considering the insults and deep injuries that Mataaafa and the majority of the Samoan people have suffered at the hands of Germany', their forbearance had been remarkable. A complaint by Knappe that British and American residents carried distinguishing marks after the German defeat on 18 December enabled him to develop this theme. The Germans had that morning launched a surprise attack; not long before they had hunted and shot in cold blood four Mata'afa adherents, and deported others, while 'all along [they] had shewn an astonishing indifference to Samoan life and rights'. It was hardly likely anybody would want to be mistaken for a German.¹¹

If the channel by which news of German plans for 18 December had reached Mata'afa were really wanted, he thought it was not far to seek - the Samoan, Le Mamea. Once an adherent of Colonel Steinberger, now a German satellite,

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⁹ Thurston to F.O., 12 and 24 June 1889, F058/249.
¹⁰ Idem, 24 June 1889, loc.cit.
¹¹ Idem; and see Thurston to Bates, 3 April 1889, George Handy Bates Papers.
Le Mamea had been consulted by Knappe on the seventeenth, and had sent word to his wife who was with Mata'afa's forces. Thurston risked censure in order to protect European partisans in their local quarrels with the former German conquerors, doing it with an independence which reflected equally his dislike of Teutonic methods and his sense of his own indispensability to Downing Street. Over the whole Samoan business, he thought, the old ladies there were as weak as they had been about Fiji sixteen years before. In the Foreign Office he became 'this tiresome High Commissioner' as a result. That was a judgement which would have been put more strongly in Tonga by the Honourable and Reverend Shirley W. Baker.

12 Thurston to F.O., 24 June 1889, F058/249.
13 Minute on Thurston to F.O., 28 August 1889, F058/249.
Chapter 19

'The first time I ever engineered a revolution'

Never again after his 1885 visit did the Premier of Tonga put up under Thurston's roof. Instead, the Reverend George Brown came whenever he could contrive it. Brown had been appointed Special Commissioner from the Wesleyan Conference to reconcile Free Church with Wesleyan Church. Since neither Baker nor the Wesleyans were ripe for compromise, he was not slow to set about trying to involve his friend the High Commissioner. After all, Brown's other self Carpe Diem had praised Thurston in the Sydney Morning Herald over the years. Even so, Brown took care to approach him with extreme deference. And Thurston knew his danger. The Saints had put a torch into the Tongan thatch themselves. Let them out put their own fire.

Yet Baker would have to be put out too, for reasons distinct from his trespasses against Zion. That conviction deepened in Thurston. Tonga remained much more his concern than Samoa. By August 1888 he had decided that none of King George Tupou's promises to Mitchell about an end to persecution would be kept. He had reached this conclusion 'slowly and with reluctance', he told the Colonial Office,

under a sense of the violent and often unwarrantable hostility with which Mr Baker has been pursued by his opponents both clerical and lay. But the condition of things is now changed; and any neglect or refusal on the part of Mr Baker to do justice to the people, and conform to the King's engagements, can only...point to the necessity of his being prohibited...from longer remaining in Tonga.\(^1\)

\(^1\)E.g., Brown to Thurston, 25 September 1889, Letterbook. George Brown Papers; and see Brown to Waterhouse, 30 July 1888, MOM 166, after a visit to Thurston; for Carpe Diem on Thurston, see, e.g., Sydney Morning Herald, 14 April 1886.

\(^2\)Thurston to C.O., 28 August, WPHC-Despatches to S. of S.
What had really changed was that he could no longer believe in his own power to influence Baker. The Premier now lived mainly in Auckland to look after his daughter Beatrice, paralyzed in the assassination attempt. On flying visits to Tonga he sent off letters indicating he felt strong enough to defy the High Commissioner. He had signed a treaty of friendship with America and felt the more secure. This was a mistake. Thurston’s view of his own dominance gave him enough confidence to act regardless of the American Eagle or his masters’ possible reaction to its squawks. If Baker were left to go on making treaties, and threaten appeals to his great and powerful allies, Tonga would become as tangled-up internationally as sad Samoa. 'National interests' could be used as a sop to Downing Street. Baker was harassing British traders. 'Mr Baker need not worry over my "important instructions"' - Thurston told Brown grimly in September 1888 after an exchange between Baker and the Deputy Commissioner - 'but had far better seize the numerous opportunities offered him of shewing he is an honest man.'

Baker was embittered by his daughter's crippled condition. His sense of reality deserted him. He had grown increasingly defiant in face of the bad publicity he received wherever Wesleyan pens could find printers. Perhaps over-confident after publication of Mitchell's relatively favourable report, he remained strong too in his possession of the mind of Tupou. And on this point hung the question Thurston must resolve. If Baker were genuinely interpreter of Tupou's will, Mitchell's reading of the situation still stood. The Premier might even now be a check on the fury of His Tongan Majesty against the Wesleyan remnant, whom Tupou might well see as rebels. But if Baker meant himself when he spoke of the King, then he were better deported.

Sixteen years before, a similar point had been decided against Thurston. Recollection of Goodenough's misreading made him wary now. And his seeming acquiescence encouraged Baker to play, fatally for himself, with the verbal equivalent of nooses and trapdoors. His correspondence with Deputy Commissioner Leefe was that of a man who felt absolutely safe. Thurston's instructions to Leefe in reply often had to be

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3 Thurston to Brown, 27 September 1888, Brown Papers; and see WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 1888-90, passim.
4 Brown's Letterbooks report revealing conversations with Baker.
temporising. He urged non-interference in domestic Tongan questions, and pointed out that Leefe's credence in rumoured threats of fresh onslaughts upon Wesleyans being authorised by Baker, once he was safely back in Auckland, was of no other service than to provide Baker with seeming instances of British hostility to the King and his government. Then Baker's foot slipped off the edge of the precipice. He published in a Tongan Blue Book a statement, purportedly by the Minister for Police, alleging that Deputy Commissioner Symonds, Moulton's now dead son-in-law, had encouraged the would-be assassins of Baker and taken one of their muskets into his keeping. Baker retracted, but only after having the King - ostensibly - write in anger to Thurston with a litany of complaint about British interference in Tonga and a promise to appeal to the world. He virtually libelled Sir Arthur Gordon along with George Brown. Baker assured Brown that, in return for private agreement between High Commissioner and Wesleyan Mission to remove Baker in 1880, Brown was not gaoled by the High Commissioner for his punitive action in the Bismarcks.

Brown's letters flowed to Thurston in the hope of moving him to action. He moved slowly. He assured the Colonial Office that Baker was the culprit. The King - 'for whom in common with all who remember him in former years I entertain a high personal regard' - could be no comprehending party to the statements. In his personal relations with Baker he assumed a more threatening attitude than Baker had ever expected from the friend of 1885, former servant of King Cakobau. They met in Auckland in December 1889. Thurston was ready to tell Brown privately what had passed: his being out when Baker called in much style, his cutting Baker in public, and then an interview.

He seemed perfectly amazed that I refused to receive or recognize him privately and socially and much upset when I said that nothing should be left undone on my part to expose the actual character of his proceedings so that the good people of Auckland, among whom he posed as a

5 Thurston to Leefe, 10 January 1888 (draft), on Leefe to Thurston, 24 December 1887, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 88/266.
6 Brown Papers and Letterbooks, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General- 89/128.
7 Thurston to C.O., 28 August 1889, WPHC Despatches to S. of S.
Thurston had their correspondence about the consular libels printed. When Baker assured him that his retraction, written in Auckland, committed Tupou and Tonga, he told Baker that he had

made a public apology and confessed the King a libeller under circumstances which preclude the possibility of a doubt that you are acting as if you were King - Lords & Commons of Tonga rolled into one -

If the King in Council disavowed the apology, he would resign, replied Baker - and was told that his official life in Tonga was probably drawing to a close anyway:

but be that as it may, I shall not allow you to withdraw under the plea that you do so in order to please HM.G. or the H.C. I shall visit Tonga in May...and I shall expect your Government, if it still exists, to meet me frankly, and shew me that in accordance with its promise a general amnesty to political offenders had been announced & that as regards religious worship perfect freedom exists - Mr Baker was silent - got up - and left the room with these brief words - 'I promise Your Excellency that I will do my best to make things go straighter in future.'

How Baker would have reported this conversation there is no evidence - nor whether he recalled Thurston's confrontation with Goodenough. The irony of it may well have been bitterly enough on his mind. Perhaps it was on his John Bull lips in the oily, aspirateless way in which he talked, when he dined later at Apia with R.L. Stevenson. He was by then exiled from the kingdom in the creation of which he was at any rate a junior partner.

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8 Thurston to Brown, 30 January 1890, Brown Papers.
9 Idem.
Baker's government still endured when H.M.S. *Rapid* brought Thurston to Nuku'alofa on 25 June 1890 - but for bare three weeks longer. Baker was sent packing. The circumstance of his removal and exile to New Zealand involved Thurston in more contrived despatch-writing than was his custom. He was under instructions not to deport Baker without first reporting to London. Perhaps guessing that this was on Mitchell's advice, and certainly trusting his own judgement more, he was not inclined to let his hands be tied while he argued with Downing Street. *A fait accompli* was required - but should seem to be effected by the Tongans, not the High Commissioner.

He had told Brown that a climax was approaching. Salaries were unpaid, taxes not coming in - 'the motive power is being exerted - as is desirable, from within'. 'The Tongans are learning the value of Bakers reign and chafing under it sorely.'\(^{11}\) So he found in June-July 1890. So the situation was represented to him by chiefs led by Fatafahi (father of Tupou's great-grandson and heir, Taufa'ahau) and Tugi. They were hostile to Tupou and Baker both, in all probability, but it was expedient for Thurston to adopt them. Within a few years Fatafahi was a guest at Government House and was sending greetings to Thurston's family after his return to Tonga with the almost obligatory cases of plants.

At his jauntiest, Thurston described his action to his constant correspondents at Kew. He had

visited Tonga the Holy, or Sacred, & sent the Honble & Revd. S.W. Baker sky high (very much to his astonishment) and set up - not another King, but at least another Joseph. It was the first time I ever engineered a Revolution.\(^{12}\)

As he put it to the Colonial Office, in more than formal contrast, he had not expected that the gravity of the Tongan situation, the hostility to Baker and the danger of his being assassinated, would lead to his dismissal by Tupou and subsequent embarkation for Auckland. He was told by the High

\(^{11}\) Thurston to Brown, 30 January 1890, Brown Papers; and to C.O., 27 January 1890, WPHC Despatches to S. of S.

\(^{12}\) Thurston to Thiselton-Dyer, 30 November 1890, Kew Letters.
Commissioner that an order would be issued prohibiting his return for two years.\textsuperscript{13}

He reported his wish that the King should appoint a council to meet him, as in 1880, and Baker's attempts to frustrate this in the desire to maintain his own direct line to Tupou. He emphasized attempts made from Free Church pulpits to convince the fiercely nationalistic Tongans that the High Commissioner's object was annexation to Fiji; and dwelt on his care to convince Tugi and Fatafahi that, if invited, his concern would rather be to strengthen Tonga's independence. He spoke of their relief at this, and quoted their outspokenness against Baker. They said he possessed the King utterly. Because of his hostility they could no longer go freely to Tupou:

Mr Baker was King and everything else. Tonga was crushed and dead. Could I inform them where all the Tongan revenue went to?\textsuperscript{14}

Then he was visited by the Minister of Finance - classifactory brother to Tupou - along with chiefs like Tugi's son George Tukuaho, 'a well educated and even accomplished man' who was A.D.C. to Tupou. They complained about Baker's high-handedness, his malevolence, and harped on the probability that he would be killed. After dark he never went out without an armed guard. 'He was the head and front of the evils they complained of.'\textsuperscript{15}

Tupou remained the problem, with his failure to contact Thurston after their first meeting and his Baker-reported irritation at Thurston's bringing an unacceptable man to interpret - notional irritation, according to Tupou himself when Thurston sent to inquire of him in Baker's absence. He was an old man, and touchy, but in full command of his faculties. He was in command of Tonga too. No transfer of executive power from Baker to the ambitious chiefs could be effected except at Tupou's will. On 4 July Thurston wrote to him declining to approach the throne through Baker:

It is true that Mr. Baker is the Premier of your Majesty's Government; but it is not that I believe

\textsuperscript{13}Thurston to C.O., 31 July 1890, WPHC Despatches to S. of S. and C0225/34.
\textsuperscript{14}Idem.
\textsuperscript{15}Idem.
that he is ruining Tonga and making its people poor and unhappy by his unwise administration of Tongan affairs that I have no faith in him, but... because I have satisfied myself that Mr. Baker will... misrepresent the object of my communications to your Majesty's and your Majesty's to me; and that alone is why I cannot have anything to do with him as between your Majesty and myself.¹⁶

He saw Tupou later that day in the presence of the Assistant Premier, Sateki, and Baker's soapy coadjutor in the Free Church, the Reverend J.B. Watkin. The King seemed exhausted, supporting himself with difficulty on a stick even in his chair. Long silences punctuated the interview. Thurston concluded that to go on with Baker in physical possession of the palace would make a nonsense of his visit. Next morning Fatafahi, Tukuaho and the rest came again to assure him they would submit no longer to Baker's 'oppression and mal- evolence'. And Thurston was in no two minds how to act:

satisfied that grave wrongs were still being committed, and former wrongs continued; that the freedom promised in matters of religious worship had not been fulfilled; that the Premier, both feared and hated, was unworthy of longer credit or confidence, and finally convinced that so long as Mr. Baker remained Mayor of the Palace every opportunity of conferring with the King upon the objects of my visit would be denied me, and that if the native mind was not at once pacified serious disorders must soon recur, I felt that Mr. Baker's presence was unquestionably dangerous to the peace and good order of the islands.¹⁷

It was the conclusion with which he had come to Tonga. Only the Colonial Office's unwelcome instructions made him wrap the matter up in so many Tongan affidavits about the hatred in which Baker was held.

His prohibition of Baker on 5 July followed Tupou's dismissal of his advisor for more than two decades. But the

¹⁶ Thurston to George Tupou, 4 July 1890, encl. ibid.
¹⁷ Thurston to C.O., 31 July 1890, loc.cit.
dismissal was undoubtedly achieved by 'revolution'. Thurston had encouraged pressure being put upon the aged King by his chiefs, some of whom were traditional enemies of his house. It could be represented overseas as undemocratic interference by British imperialism in the affairs of an independent state. It is sometimes interpreted in that light by Tongans today. And so it was seen on the spot by a former follower of Garibaldi, C.D. Whitcombe, who arrived from Auckland to take employment under Baker as a schoolmaster just in time to see the source of his salary deported by 'Pooh Bah'; or 'Sir John', as Thurston quickly became in the red-shirt's journal once Thurston recognized his monetary claims. Notwithstanding, Whitcombe set about Thurston in the Auckland press.18 As Thurston told F.J. Moss ruefully:

He was to be a creature of Bakers I imagine — He quoted Sir George Grey about once in three minutes and said he had been guided by him — I really took the fellows part and procured him a gratuity but he lied about me most unmercifully.19

Thurston never could bear being lied about or in any way referred to unfairly. He watched the press avidly, contesting officially and in private all suggestions that Baker had done well by Tonga, or that the upshot of his deportation was Tonga's dominance by Fiji. Comments by his old adversary Sir Robert Stout drew him out in his letters to Stout's fellow countryman, Moss:

The idea that to some extent prevails in Auckland, judging from its newspapers, that at least Mr Bakers rule did some good to Tonga is without fact to support it — They say he never sold land — No — He could not. The King would not let him. That policy was the Kings long before Tonga saw the face of Baker — But he tricked the King into granting 99 year leases of land to Germans when an honest Britisher could not lease a house lot for a store to compete with the Germans —20

18 Diary of C.D. Whitecombe, 1890, ML.
19 Thurston to Moss, 28 October 1890, F.J. Moss Papers, AML.
20 Idem.
Thurston could not forget that he had been playing Goodenough's part, however much better his cause and method. The tableau of one former European adviser to a South Seas Kingdom kicking out another was not lost on commentators.21 He was seen as that quiet implacable little gentleman who bided his time and had his revenge in the end.22

He did not enjoy the public outpourings of Wesleyan joy either. At the same time as he was admonishing the Reverend Mr Watkin for his pulpit-lamentations for Baker, he was advising the General Conference to moderate its expressions of triumph. It were unwise, he had them told, for Wesleyans to indulge in acclamations of victory; to pray overmuch for those who had spitefully used them; or to press forward every petty question involving the actual ownership of a wooden drum, a sash window, or a kerosene lamp.23 This advice was unwelcome to Langham. On furlough to Australia, the Qase Levu had been expressing just such pious thoughts to newspaper reporters, while rubbing his clerical knuckles with joy over the final discomfiture of Shirley, that son of the devil.24 From Watkin, on the other hand, came promises of support for the new administration and thanks for Thurston's 'kind and frank letter'.25

The stability of the Tongan administration was the question at issue following Baker's removal - its stability, and the need to emphasize its independence of Fiji. Thurston sent sanguine young Basil Thomson over for a year. He amused himself and his master by seeking out Bakerian absurdities in legal phraseology and accounting. In June 1891 Thurston went up again to discuss his own relations with Tupou:

If anything goes wrong the King despatches a schooner & messenger to me & it is understood generally that while they are going to try & drive the coach they fall back

21E.g., T.H. Prichard in Argus, 2 August 1890.
22Obituary in Christian Australian World, 19 February 1897.
23Collet's letters to Australian Wesleyan Conference, 30 July and 1 August 1890, WPHC Outward Letters.
24Langham to Worrall, 8 September 1890, MOM 295.
25Watkin to Thurston, 2 October 1890, encl. Thurston to Moss, 28 October 1890, Moss Papers.
at once for aid and advice...if they see they are failing.26

But however much Thurston wanted to believe Tupou - 'that truly good old man' - had really hated Baker's dominance as Louis XIII was supposed to have hated Richelieu's,27 however genuinely he imagined the heir Taufa'ahau would be sent to school under his patronage,28 the fact remained that Tupou resented, if not his loss of an old adviser, at any rate the humiliation of being obliged to bow before his juniors' will. Taufa'ahau went to Auckland under Baker's tutelage, not Sydney under Thurston's. And Sir John, Grand Panjandrum in the press, a self-made man whose career struck newspapers as being as romantic as his rule looked tyrannical, was irrevocably set up as a dog who devoured dogs. He was not likely, then, to stop even at a celebrated novelist who dabbled in island politics, like Robert Louis Stevenson in Samoa. For when Tonga was quiet, Samoa awoke again in the early 1890s to add new dimensions to the Grand Panjandrum's reputation.

26 Thurston to Moss, 9 June [1891], ibid.
27 Quotation from a letter from Thurston in Gordon's diary, BM ADD MSS 49265.
28 Thurston to Moss, 9 June [1891], loc.cit.
Chapter 20

'Deport all novel writers'

Thurston could easily imagine that Stevenson saw deportation by the High Commissioner as a distinct probability. Stevenson thought it fair recompense for letters he was publishing in The Times about Samoa, and for his attempts to play politics. Settling near Apia in 1890, he had made himself one of the type Thurston detested - white man on the beach, without real influence anywhere, playing, perhaps only half-seriously, with Islanders' lives. The international status of Samoa had supposedly been settled by a tripartite Conference at Berlin, held in the hurricane's sobering wake. Stevenson was confessedly seeking to get it all changed again.

Motives of vanity inspired him, Thurston assumed, but Stevenson's lively letters suggest that what he wanted was to be noticed as a man no less than as a writer. Self-exiled to the South Seas for relief from tuberculosis to become, as he said, 'a subject of the High Commissioner', Stevenson had discovered a genuine cause, a justifiable focus for publicity seeking. Stevenson seriously thought he might become British Consul. He was enchanted by living in a place where, facetiously speaking, every man was important. He delighted in communicating his sense that you did not know what history was, or politics, until you saw them on their minute South

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1 Thurston to Cusack-Smith, 3 March 1893, BCS 2.
Seas scale. The microscope revealed a tale worth telling. 'Enter Rumour, painted full of tongues'—this was the excellent motto which, in his *Footnote to History*, Stevenson borrowed from *King Henry the Fourth Part Two* for the Apia community, three hundred Europeans strong. His own tongue was the most entertaining, most widely heard, until a brain haemorrhage took him off in December 1894.

He might have left Samoa before that, if the High Commissioner had indeed been inclined to act on the feeling of Jack Thurston:

> Probably the only thing to 'pacificate' that spot would be to set up the government of a military post—make it felony to own or edit a newspaper, deport all novel writers and for ten years allow no one to call his soul his own.

That was satire for the private consumption of the Secretary of State, though. Thurston had no mind to flatter Stevenson with his official attention, thinking him not really a serious candidate. Leave him alone, he wrote privately to the new Consul and Deputy Commissioner, T.B. Cusack-Smith, who was worried. Stevenson 'may want to be noticed as a terribly dangerous fellow', said Thurston. 'Good subject for a new novel & an access of personal importance.'

 Nonetheless there was scope for Stevenson's satire too. Under the Berlin Act, Samoan sovereignty was recognised but restricted. A Chief Justice from Sweden was supposed to act as *deus ex machina* in any dispute. A German President of the Apia Municipality had the spending of most of Samoa's revenue. The three Consuls rapidly convened themselves into a board of review, as a drag on the others. All conspired to embitter

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3 Stevenson to Scott, 20 January 1890, to Colvin, 18 April 1891, *Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Sydney Colvin, III, 151 and 253; and to James, 5 December 1892, ibid., IV, 133-4; and this sense permeates all his letters to the press; for his wish to be British Consul, see ibid., IV, 70.


5 Thurston to Knutsford, 11 May 1892, CO225/40.

6 Thurston to Cusack-Smith, 16 August 1892, BCS 2.
Samoan politics in the '90s, not without help from Samoans. Factionalism reawakened because Mata'afa Iosefo, the only man capable of uniting Samoans, had been too successful a remover of German heads for Bismarck to accept him as King. With Malietoa Laupepa reinstalled, Mata'afa set up a rival power centre. His explanation was that while Malietoa might be recognized as King of Samoa he, Mata'afa, was King of Samoans. Too many Samoans agreed for Malietoa's government to go on overlooking his 'rebellion'.

While President, Chief Justice and Consular Board all tried to govern in Malietoa's name, the comedy grew blacker. As Stevenson said, their government obliterated the memory of its past mistakes by producing new surprises. Five of Mata'afa's chiefs, gaoled, were promised a rapid exit upwards by dynamite if a threatened rescue attempt took place. Then they were hastily deported instead. The episode afforded Stevenson a nice peroration to a Times letter. At least, he begged, let such antics at the gaol cease, so that

If I be fined a dollar to-morrow for fast riding in Apia Street, I may not awake next morning to find my sentence increased to one of banishment or death by dynamite.

Since he could have afforded the dollar to keep him out of prison, he was romancing, but it was a remark that Thurston might have envied, in his less solemn moments.

They had more in common than a good acquaintance with King Henry the Fourth Parts One and Two – Thurston, the robust, self-styled 'old South Seas ranger', and Stevenson, the pallid victim of 'bluidy Jack', as he called tuberculosis, who was enacting post-'45 adventures like those he had evoked in Kidnapped, by making himself political adviser to the local Jacobite Pretender. As Thurston said, Mata'afa was a man 'of high rank and equally high character, with sensibilities... exceptionally acute...'. If ranger and novelist had ever met, they might have found that they had romanticism in common too. Each loved to tell stories of outlandish places, droll

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7 The Times, 17 November 1891, Stevenson's letter of 12 October.
8 Idem.
9 Thurston, to C.O., 10 November 1893, CO83/58.
human beings, and the sea. Their humour was similar. Like Stevenson, Thurston found the Pacific a no-man's-land of the ages. And his feeling for the islands long pre-dated Stevenson's concern. Thurston's embittered comments on Samoa in his private letters of the '80s had a counterpart in Stevenson's newspaper letters, as well as in *A Footnote to History*, Stevenson's splendidly ironic book on Germany's attempts to seize Samoa.

They never met. The only private correspondence between them came too near Stevenson's death for its conciliatory tone to be followed up. Before Stevenson leaped to the conclusion that the High Commissioner was persecuting him, he had heard about Thurston from Baker - who was 'wholly insincere' but 'a thousand miles from ill-meaning', to Stevenson; from local Marist priests bemoaning their brother Vidal's tribulations; and from the Levuka beach. Its malcontents regaled Mrs Stevenson with their Governor's demerits when she called on a holiday cruise - 'the government is rotten, rotten, I say', said a white-haired American who must have been the ghost of the U.S. Consul from the 1860s of whom *Na Kena Vai* had often fallen foul, Isaac Brower. Stevenson was taught to regard MacGregor as the model colonial administrator for the Western Pacific, ready as he heard MacGregor was to shoot, burn, and hang. He recognised Thurston - who would have hanged Europeans before Papuans - as a tyrant, one of the bureaucrats responsible for continuance of muddle in Samoa.

On his side Thurston, who now had no direct part in Samoa at all, thought Stevenson's attack on Dr Hyde of Honolulu in defence of Father Damien's memory unnecessarily savage. He saw its author as a publicist seeking martyrdom, a Johnny-come-lately drawing public plaudits by printing comments similar to those he himself had been making under seal of confidentiality for years. Above all, he thought Stevenson was likely to lead Samoans into more disaster. If the novelist's intervention had any effect at all, it was to encourage them to resist the

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10 Below, p.252.


13 Thurston's Gilbert and Ellice Islands Journal, 3 July 1893, NAF MS3.
Treaty Powers.\textsuperscript{14}

In practical terms his press campaign had not much impact overseas. And though he was not all the 'very eccentric and fifth novelist' that Thurston set him down,\textsuperscript{15} Stevenson was scarcely a responsible political being either. Naive in his belief that he could bring peace to Samoa by mediation between Mata'a'afa and Laupepa, he was gloriously self-indulgent in this self-assumed, and rather assuming, role. His letters might discomfort Downing Street, but the Berlin Act – no object of admiration to Thurston – was a fact. It was supposed to be open to review, but no one except Stevenson seriously supposed the Powers would bother. To bait the Germans when they acted unilaterally in the '80s was one thing; to defy the Powers together, quite another. And though Stevenson's view was that the influence he believed he had was devoted to effecting alliance between Laupepa and Mata'a'afa, neither contender could have been unaware that in the well-circulated \textit{Footnote to History} the mediator had represented Laupepa as a weakling, Mata'a'afa as a hero. If Mata'a'afa made himself agreeable to Stevenson it was partly because he supposed this famous man would help him achieve his destiny.

Exile or a premature grave, Thurston imagined that destiny would turn out to be. While Stevenson entertained men-o'warsmen and, throughout 1892, half forbiddingly, half hopefully expected to be taken away under the white ensign, Thurston concluded that to urge Mata'a'afa to negotiate with Malietoa was to encourage him indirectly in his belief that he could actually choose whether or not to do so – and that he might yet eventually be recognised as King in Malietoa's place. Indirect communication was the keynote of Samoan politics. And the result would be more loss of life as the Powers, however reluctantly, stood by their obligation to Laupepa.

On the fringe of a Californian bush-fire Stevenson had once set fire to moss on a tree to see whether the tree itself

\textsuperscript{14}See Thurston to Cusack-Smith and to Knutsford, loc.cit.; to Mrs Bates, 30 April 1893, Bates Papers; and to C.O., 29 April 1893, CO225/42.

\textsuperscript{15}Thurston to Mrs Bates, 30 April 1893, Bates Papers.
would catch alight. The tree had caught. And Samoa was likely to burn anew. In the end Thurston had authoritative Samoan opinion to support his disapproval of 'the ever intermeddling white men', for Mata'afa Iosefo was to make the same complaint. During the early 1890s the most prominent of intermeddlers was probably Stevenson. Stevenson thought so; though when, after the inevitable disaster for Mata'afa, he too blamed white interference, he never seems to have thought of his own.17

What moved Thurston to anger was not the weight of the twenty years that had passed since he himself had played such a role. It was that these meddlers could not win. He felt contempt for men who would not be found at Mata'afa's side when the push came, as he had stood at Ratu Cakobau's in September 1873 at the Battle of Nasova, borrowing a revolver for the occasion. Even so, he still had no intention of moving specifically against Stevenson when, in December 1892, he issued a Queen's Regulation prescribing a £10 fine or three month's gaol for anyone who by word, deed or writing sought to cause discontent, public disorder, civil war or hatred or contempt of government, in Samoa.

It seemed one of his more Draconian pieces of legislation. Actually it was intended to meet sedition with a more workable and lesser punishment than deportation. The case he instanced as proof of the need for it was not that of Samoa's novelist but William Yandell's. The irrepressible part-European had advised Samoans to pay no taxes to Malietoa.18 And when a storm broke upon him from press and Parliament, Thurston swore that Stevenson, however famous, was not at all aimed at. While Stevenson was telling the world otherwise - before lapsing into a more discreet silence - Thurston denied it not only to Downing Street but privately in tones of surprise to Cusack-Smith, who would have known if he were prevaricating.19 Stevenson seemed to have done far less than Yandell, and Thurston did not think Yandell's offence worth deportation.

17 Thurston to Cusack-Smith, 18 August 1893, BCS2; Mata'afa's opinion quoted to Salisbury, 5 October 1899, F097/613. Dr Mackenzie - 'Robert Louis Stevenson and Samoa', 357 - thinks Stevenson must have been aware of his responsibility.
18 Thurston to C.O., 28 December 1892, CO225/39.
19 Thurston to Cusack-Smith, 3 March and 1 June 1893, BCS2.
When he learned of the interpretation being put on the regulation as he took holiday in Auckland and Sydney in March and April 1893, he thought Stevenson's conscience must be pricked.  

So it was, and in a very delicate area. Stevenson had actually instigated Yandell - 'not a man that I trust but a man that chanced to be at hand' - to urge Samoans not to pay taxes. In some anxiety lest he be punished as he felt he deserved, he had successfully sought to cover his tracks. His part was never mentioned. No deportable offence, Yandell's, in Thurston's eyes; but Stevenson's part seemed worthy of deportation to Stevenson himself. He threw up a smoke screen. He filled the press with - as he represented it, concealing his offence - his unwarranted danger, and wrote in outraged innocence to the Foreign Office. It was not a pretty performance; but very few people knew the Yandell circumstances - not Thurston, clearly, or he would have reported the novelist's involvement when he was assuring Downing Street that he had certainly not aimed his regulation at Stevenson, though Stevenson was distinctly an irresponsible man.  

'The galled jade always winces', he told Cusack-Smith. Feeling his clock running down after the years of work, Thurston had been trying to rest up in Auckland for a projected visit to the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. Reporters besieged him with London cables, some garbled. Initially he refused comment, while Stevenson, also passing through Auckland and innocently calling on the ambiguous Sir George Grey (who advised him to shut up), assured the *New Zealand Herald* that of course this legislation was aimed at him. It was striking even for that singular limbo, the Western Pacific. He must abide his fate, he supposed, writing around energetically in hope of escaping it. Waylaid by reporters again, Thurston learned it was said that he had been instructed to modify his

20. Thurston to Cusack-Smith, 3 March 1893, BCS2.  
22. Thurston to C.O., 29 April 1893, CO225/42.  
23. Thurston to Cusack-Smith, 1 June 1893, BCS2.  
25. See, e.g., Stevenson to Rosebery, February 1893, CO225/44; and *The Times*, 4 April 1893.
attitude to Stevenson, whom *The Times* had declared justified by bureaucrats' bungling over Samoa. Doubtless that meant the President and Chief Justice, Thurston returned - men in a difficult position, he had always thought. As for the dynamite story, he (mistakenly) believed that was a *canard*. If Stevenson had any complaint against himself, let him put it face to face now while they were both in Auckland.

'Poor Samoa!' he exclaimed in a letter to Mrs G.H. Bates. It was no nearer peace than when he had met her husband there in 1886.

There can be no true peace until one Nation or the other governs there or until we leave the Samoans to fight out their own destiny and encourage them to begin by hanging every meddlesome white man who persistently refuses to mind his own business.  

He had made this feeling plain enough in the official disclaimer he had sent Downing Street the day before. Stevenson was a mischievous man with a morbid desire for publicity, he said. However unconsciously, he would probably lead Mata'afa to believe he had influence with the British government, which would encourage Mata'afa in holding out, to his own eventual disadvantage. Still, as Thurston put it to Mrs Bates:

I have...no intention of bothering myself with the man. If America England & Germany cannot keep things quiet in Samoa I am not going to intrude my official finger.  

To the extent that he had intruded it legislatively, he was instructed to withdraw two-fifths of his finger by amending his Regulation. The Colonial Office largely agreed with M.P.s that it was abhorrent to British justice. His masters wondered whether Sir John might be jealous of so famous a writer rubbing shoulders with him in his own world. They felt free to lecture him on the uncontestable fact that criticism of Samoa's government under the Berlin Act was all too justifiable. This line, Thurston might have thought,

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26 Thurston to Mrs Bates, 30 April 1893, Bates Papers.  
27 Thurston to C.O., 29 April 1893, CO225/42.  
28 Thurston to Mrs Bates, 30 April 1893, Bates Papers.
came oddly from officials who had just agreed that Mata'afa must be suppressed in order to maintain the treaty.  

Thurston made his feeling plain to Stevenson privately a few months later. Returning from the Gilbert Islands, he had an injured letter from Stevenson complaining that Thurston's Auckland and Sydney press interviews constituted a newspaper war which was 'neither amusing nor wise'.  

Thurston thought that bordered on cheek, coming as it did from an inveterate controversialist who had gone for him first:

You have attacked me through the medium of the Public Press - I do not complain - and have brought down upon me a series of abusive notices in that class of Colonial journals which lives by pandering to what they describe as 'the people'. Of this also I make no plaint. I am too old a man, and perhaps too experienced to take such things seriously.

He was obviously hurt by notices which had set him down a despot:

You have enjoyed the satisfaction, if it is one, of the British world being told that you have 'been threatened with three months imprisonment by the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific', also that your next letters to the Times would in all probability be written from 'a cell'. 'Never before', says one journal, 'has a British story-teller figured in a more curious fashion' - I do not envy you this notoriety.

When reporters sought him out, he could hardly be expected to refuse comment, even though his words might be misheard or embroidered.

He had been given additional cause to feel sensitive about

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29 C.O. draft to Thurston, 15 April 1893, CO225/42; C.O. minutes on F.O. to C.O., 11 March 1893, CO225/44.
30 Stevenson to Thurston, 7 June 1893, encl. Thurston to Cusack-Smith, 9 October 1893, BCS2.
31 Thurston to Stevenson, 18 August 1893, encl. ibid.
the Auckland press on that visit. Fiji too had been making him notorious again. Scarcely had reporters been upon him about Stevenson than they were back drawing his attention to an article in the Catholic Times of New Zealand - largely owned by Vidal's correspondent, Bishop Redwood of Wellington - which set him down 'a Fiji Fanatic' and promoter of Wesleyanism.32 Vidal-inspired, the attack was provoked by Namata's serialised publication in translation of the textbook Arthur's Little History of England, with passages on the Reformation giving offence to the Marists. Mistranslated from the Fijian by the complaining Frenchmen, the passages were still useful enough for Langham's purposes in the Bau pulpit. His feeling was one of contempt, said Thurston, reading the Catholic Times. In fact, he had warned the Namata translator, A.B. Joske, to be careful, and the editor, Basil Thomson, to publish nothing that would give offence.33 Lack of communication between Vidal and Thurston's juniors had led Vidal to approach Redwood (whose paper was soon bankrupt) with a view to public reproof of the Governor. There was another question in the Commons aimed at Thurston, and pained letters went on his behalf to Vidal asking why Vidal had never retracted this attack publicly, as he had done in private conversation.34

A few months later, in 1894, the continuing question of Samoa brought Vidal to Thurston's door. He was seeking his intervention there if the local Marists should ask it on their client Mata'afa's behalf. In turn, Thurston secretly advised Cusack-Smith to discourage Samoans from believing that Vidal, or through him Britain, could help them: 'until the Berlin Act is denounced or merged by consent into something else we must all loyally maintain it'.35 Since the Consuls, Cusack-Smith among them, were prepared to maintain it by naval gunfire if necessary, any other course meant more bloodshed.

Answering Stevenson the year before, Thurston had only needed to hint this. On 17 July 1893 Stevenson had laid aside Weir of Hermiston to write sadly to Mata'afa, a prisoner

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32 Catholic Times, 21 April 1893; and see Redwood's letters to Vidal, Archdiocese of Suva Archives.
33 New Zealand Herald, 24 April 1893; Thomson's memorandum, 7 September 1893, FM Doc. 6.
34 Idem; FCSO 93/1924, 2224.
35 Thurston to Cusack-Smith, 27 August 1894 (secret), WPHC: Samoa, Inward Despatches, 1894.
aboard H.M.S. *Katoomba* after being defeated by Malietoa Laupepa and surrendering under threat of naval bombardment. Stevenson's heart was sore because of his very great love for Mata'afa, he wrote; the family at Vailima had been weeping for the chiefs who were dead. All predictable enough, an eloquent commentary on pitting romanticism against the power of countries who were unwilling to retract the mistakes they had fastened upon Samoa at their Berlin Conference. In August Thurston told Stevenson:

>You enjoy, and I believe deservedly, the reputation of being a warm sympathiser with Samoans and with native races generally. I also have a keen sympathy for people among whom I have lived during the best years of my life. That you have played a part in recent Samoan affairs is not I think questioned, whether a wise one or not is to say the least not free from doubt....

The rebuke was apparently accepted; before Stevenson died next year, Thurston had from him a letter which he took to mean the hatchet was buried.

Mata'afa lived. Eight years of exile were in store for him before he returned as German candidate for the Kingship. At the time of his deportation Thurston exerted himself with London to get the Samoan leader out of German hands and sent for confinement in Fiji. Malietoa Laupepa had been so depressed in German captivity that he attempted suicide; how much more uncomfortable must Mata'afa be?

To send a man like Mata'afa to the Marshall islands - waterless sandbanks - and among a totally strange and alien people, seems to me nothing less than cruelty. He had much better have died fighting.

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36 Encl. Cusack-Smith to F.O., 12 August 1893, FO58/277.
37 Thurston to Stevenson, 18 August 1893, BCS2.
38 Thurston to Meade, 24 May 1894, CO83/59; Mackenzie, 'Robert Louis Stevenson and Samoa', 322-3, quotes from the only surviving fragment of Stevenson's conciliatory letter.
39 Thurston to C.O., 10 November 1893, CO83/58.
40 Thurston to Cusack-Smith, 27 October 1893, FO58/278.
Thurston did not get him. He did entertain a lesser Samoan chief whom he quoted privately to the Colonial Office in 1894. Not long after giving the franchise to women, New Zealand was again agitating for Samoa. It was bad enough that the Cook Islands should lately have been given to New Zealand, Thurston said. Samoa was unthinkable.

The proposal has however its humorous side. A Samoan Chief on a visit here said to me the other day - 'if we ever go under the British Flag we will go under The Queen only. New Zealand!! Why New Zealanders cannot govern themselves let alone us Samoans' - How do you mean I said - they do govern themselves. 'No' - replied my friend, 'they had to call in women to help them - are we Samoans to be ruled by New Zealand women?' and then he muttered something to himself which - might have been a short prayer or a snatch of some ancient song. 41

41 Thurston to Meade, 24 May 1894, CO83/59.
Snatches of other songs, in the form of traders' protests and island rulers' petitions, had been reaching Thurston from the Cook Islands ever since a British Protectorate was declared there at New Zealand's instigation in 1888. They were giving him 'some trouble and some amusement', he told F.J. Moss in October 1890. He did not think any man need yearn for the post of Resident there. Since New Zealand was paying the salary, the job was her gift. In the tradition of failing minor politicians, his old acquaintance Moss wanted the job. If he got it, catspaw of New Zealand party politics as he would be, he was likely to end up a sacrificial victim to the firms which had lobbied the New Zealand Parliament into promising the money.

So much Thurston assumed from his own version of first principles. The main firm, Donald & Edenborough of Auckland, obliged him by hinting that if the future Resident did not cater for such as themselves, his chair would be warmed for him. Their agent Pearce had been ejected from Mangaia, which London Missionary Society influence had kept closed to resident traders until declaration of the Protectorate enabled the Aucklanders to argue they could open their stores wherever they pleased in British territory. In the South Sea manner, the Consul, who aspired to be made Deputy Commissioner, was Donald & Edenborough's Cook Islands manager R. Exham. The three 'Queens' of Rarotonga, main island in the Cook group, were petitioning against Exham. At the same time they, the senior members of Rarotonga's leading lineages, were obliging the traders by begging for a Resident from New Zealand, not

1 Thurst on to Moss, 28 October 1890, Moss Papers.
2 Thurst on to C.O., 21 August 1890, CO225/34.
Fiji. 3 So tangled had politics among local Europeans become; let five white men land on a beach and three cliques sprang into being, with infinite possibilities for further fission. As Thurston laughed to Moss, he was invited by Exham to name at once the sum Exham should demand from the Mangaians for Pearce's ejectment; while only a little before,

I had letters from their Majesties the Queens finding fault with Mr Exham, complaining of wicked traders and grogsellers, then sundry other odd communications indicating pretty plainly that there are a number of dirty little ropes in those 'Summer Isds of Eden' (borough) & a number of rather dirty hands pulling upon them. 4

He did not love religious control such as the Reverend G.A. Harris on Mangaia evidently exercised to keep the island unpolluted. His letter indicating this sent 'the Reverend despot' into paroxysms of apologetic explanation. A tough rebuke had to go to the island council also, lest its next attempt to keep off unwanted whites should lead to violence, then punishment. 5 Still, Thurston had to admit that, if beachcombers were so influential, then 'the existence of even a narrow or exclusive Church authority is better for the natives than the absence of any authority whatever'. 6

All in all, Moss would do better to take a job in Tonga as the 'Guide Philosopher and Friend' of King George Tupou. But Moss persisted in choosing the Cook Islands, though his would-be mentor did not think the £300 a year voted in Wellington for the Resident indicated that New Zealanders

3 Exham to Thurston, 1 September 1890, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 90/266; Donald & Edenborough to High Commissioner, 19 September 1880, ibid., 90/281; petition encl. Thurston to C.O., 21 August 1890, C0225/34; Exham to F.O., 9 October 1890, encl. F.O. to C.O., 11 December 1890, C0225/35; Thurston to C.O., 23 October 1890, C0225/34.

4 Thurston to Moss, 28 October 1890, Moss Papers.

5 Idem, 30 September 1893, ibid; Harries to Thurston, 31 March 1891, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 91/79; ibid, Penrhyn chiefs to Thurston, 9 March 1891.

6 Thurston to C.O., 23 October 1890, C0225/34.
were really 'desperately smitten with the colonising fad.'

He got the job. And so Thurston was left to exchange reports and plants with Moss in Rarotonga until Thurston's very disturbed Auckland holiday in 1893 enabled Donald & Edenborough's Mr A.B. Donald to press claims in person.

Donald called with his solicitor - 'on what they are pleased to term an act of Piracy on part of the Penrhyn Islanders'. These delinquents had commissioned Donald & Edenborough's Captain Harries to buy them a schooner. In his own good time he had bought one - the Norval, from Mrs A.B. Donald. Tired of waiting, the Penrhyn people had entered into an agreement with Captain Emil Piltz for another. When Captain Harries at last brought the Norval off Penrhyn he declined to give the people possession, though they had paid 90 per cent of her £4,000 price. They seized her and carried her into the lagoon. Their leader told them jokingly not to put the white man's vessel onto a coral head, at any rate until they had him safe in irons ashore. That joke was on the speaker. The Penrhyn people never managed to keep seaworthy the schooners they bought to keep contact with the trading world. Britain had annexed the islands as a possible staging-point for a trans-Pacific cable. As a British possession, Penrhyn was in Thurston's jurisdiction. He sent Josefa Tawaki's admirer, and his own, J.K.M. Ross, European Stipendiary Magistrate for Lomaiviti, to look into the Norval affair. Much in it needed 'explanation and very clear explanation', Thurston told Moss; and hinted the same in his instructions to his own magistrate, which were virtually a statement for the Penrhyn defence:

Presuming the seizure of the 'Norval' to be justified on moral grounds and in accordance with native law, was the seizure legal or illegal? What other proceeding was open to the natives?

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7 Thurston to Moss, 28 October 1890, Moss Papers.
8 Coleman to Thurston, 18 March 1893, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 93/112; Thurston to Moss, 18 May 1893, Moss Papers.
9 Encls. Coleman to Thurston, 18 March 1893, loc.cit.
10 Thurston to Moss, 18 May 1893, Moss Papers; Minute 9 June 1893, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 93/112.
Even before he knew that £5,000 had been paid to Donald & Edenborough years before by Rarotonga for a schooner that was never handed over, Thurston was for Penrhyn. He was too late, though. Captain May in H.M.S. *Hyacinth* reached Penrhyn before Ross and handed down a judgement against the Islanders in an illegally held court. Thurston was not greatly mollified to receive May's apologetic private letter saying how much he regretted that the $1,470 he had awarded Harries had been borrowed from a French trader, with repayment to be in pearl-shell from the lagoon at ruinous interest. Nor could Thurston's emissary Ross overthrow this award, although in the substantive cases he found generally for the Penrhyn. A couple of years later they were up for breach of contract over Captain Piltz's schooner.

Thurston's intervention was of course unwelcome to the New Zealand Government. Finally it kept the High Commissioner's Court out of the Cook Islands by bringing them within the Supreme Court of New Zealand's jurisdiction in 1901. In the 1890s, though, Thurston met Wellington's protests with measured derision, determined to maintain his jurisdiction as a backup to the Cook Islands courts. New Zealand's aspirations in the Pacific were fraudulent in moral basis and disastrously clumsy in implementation, he argued. The New Zealanders had been largely responsible for German attacks on Malietoa Laupepa in the 1880s. And he gathered that it was at present only their continued pursuit of the Samoan chimera which in logic made them feel they must stay in the Cook Islands.

Moss's position was impossible. He was a political appointee:

When dissatisfaction is felt by Auckland traders because the Resident has supported the endeavours of the local [Cook Islander] judge to administer justice, or when he most properly supports the interests of the native people, he is liable to be attacked in the New Zealand Parliament by a few virulent and interested persons, while there

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11 Encl. Moss to Thurston, 2 March 1894, ibid., 94/59.
12 May to Thurston, 16 July 1893, ibid., 93/194; Minute on Ross's report, 16 September 1893, ibid., 93/205; Thurston to C.O., 14 October 1893, CO225/42.
13 Idem; and WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 95/1, 35, 175, 253, 96/241, 301.
14 Thurston to C.O., 23 and 25 August 1895, CO222/49.
will be no one sufficiently interested to defend him.\textsuperscript{15}

Moss seemed to have done well, but Thurston found no one in the islands trade with a good word to say for him. This was to be expected for 'the fact is that the island trader's ideas of business are entirely opposed to those of the average magistrate'.\textsuperscript{16} The prediction was easy: Moss eventually lost his post.

As for the Penrhyn affair, it went to make Thurston's popular reputation. A man who knew his island world, was how harbour tavern-talk represented him, however much of a damned negrophilist he might be too. A garbled version was recounted by R.L. Stevenson's friend, the supercargo Ben Hird. Thurston's journal records that they only met at Abaiang in July 1893. But Hird liked to enthuse about the way Thurston was familiar as 'the Kowond' to the Abaiang people and all Islanders. Warming to the \textit{Norval} tale, Hird had it that when Thurston asked Hird for his view of the Penrhyn people's probable reaction over the \textit{Norval}, Hird had to say Thurston's own view was right - and this though Hird always felt Penrhyn people were different from the Polynesians Thurston did know.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15}Idem, 16 October 1893 (confidential), CO225/42.
\textsuperscript{16}Idem.
\textsuperscript{17}A \textit{South-Sea Trader} - a magazine account of Hird in Thurston's press-cutting book; Thurston's Gilbert and Ellice Islands Journal, 18 July 1893.
Chapter 22

'In the same position as minors'

Tonga, Samoa, Cook Islands - these island groups with their integrated political systems were in contrast to most other places in the Western Pacific. It was a broad jurisdiction, Tahiti to New Guinea - even though these extremities were not included. Thurston had the inclination, as well as the instructions, to travel frequently in it, but no travel resources. 'No one yet ever mistook me for a dove or any other winged "manumanu". But HMG evidently imagine I possess some unusual power of locomotion for they give me none whatever.'\(^1\) He had to rely on warships and mailboats to get him around. About the largest government extant, he supposed it must be, with 'Emoluments in inverse ratio to area and responsibility.'\(^2\)

Warships took him to the New Hebrides in 1891, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in 1893, the Solomons in 1894. He travelled wearier sea-miles than he cared to think about in that tortoise-like corvette, H.M.S. \textit{Rapid}. They were made wearier by her crew's inability to put whaleboats through reef passages with the skill he had acquired in the \textit{James} thirty years before.\(^3\) Transport apart, he needed a proper civilian staff for the High Commission. It depended almost entirely on naval commanders who were made Deputy Commissioners. In Suva he had an excellent Secretary, Wilfred Collet; in Samoa and Tonga, the combined Consuls and Deputy Commissioners; but no civilian representative at all in the scattered atolls around the Line. For all Melanesia he had only Hugh Hastings Romilly, another European wreck of the South Seas, a billiard-room \textit{habitué}, though he had lived hard in New Britain and New

\(^1\)Thurston to Moss, 30 September 1892, Moss Papers.
\(^2\)Thurston to Thiselton-Dyer, 7 February 1894, Kew Letters.
\(^3\)Gilbert and Ellice Islands Journal, 5 July 1893.
Guinea in his time. 4

Romilly aspired to a softer life now. Appointed Deputy Commissioner to the New Hebrides in 1889, he proposed to live congenially at Noumea. Thurston chased him out to three rooms at Havannah Harbour in the house of Captain Donald McLeod - trader, sometime planter, alternate ally and rival of John Higginson's Compagnie Calédonienne des Nouvelle-Îles. 5 An uncomfortable billet for Romilly, but it did give him a good view of the islands trade as conducted by the principal British operator and only rich man in the New Hebrides. Romilly reported McLeod's idea of trading as fraud practised on the white derelicts who manned McLeod's copra stations, as well as on his New Hebridean labourers. Then French objections to Romilly's presence, as trespassing on New Hebrides neutrality, saved him from both McLeod and the South Seas. Nor did Thurston, who visited the New Hebrides aboard H.M.S. Goldfinch in October 1891, suppose much good would have resulted if Romilly had been allowed to remain. 6

A greatly overrated place, the New Hebrides, Thurston thought, back there twenty years after pulling along the black sand beaches recruiting labour for his Taveuni plantation. He still used New Hebridean labour, though not to the improvement of his bank balance so far as he could see. Theoretically, the group had changed since 1871 when he was there. Higginson's company claimed to have purchased pretty well as much land as charts gave the whole group. In early 1891, moved by the Presbyterian Mission's desire to combat French annexation, for which Higginson was ceaselessly lobbying in Paris, Australian businessmen and politicians like James Service had formed the Australasian New Hebrides Company. It was buying land in its turn, and asking the Federal Council of Australasia to press for British control. 7

Even though Thurston recognised they were willing to take their dividends in philanthropy as they saw it, he did not feel well-disposed to these promoters when they required him to lift High Commission restrictions on trading. Philanthropic they might be, but their alcohol had the usual

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4 Thurston to Gordon, 18 May 1890, BM Add MSS 49265.
6 Ibid., 193-4.
7 Ibid., 176-217, passim.
effect. Actual plantation development was minimal, and perhaps was better kept that way — some 140 acres cultivated on the French side, perhaps fifty by British settlers. One, Sawers on Santo, had been killed shortly before Thurston called. The land 'titles' would not bear the sort of investigation that had been applied in Fiji. The system of land purchase current in the New Hebrides he thought 'extremely unfair to the unfortunate native' who, year after year, had put marks upon paper in return for grog, arms and ammunition, then seen the European sail away apparently content with his strange bargain. 'In the minds of the natives land has been the subject of an agreement with some vague object, but that it does not include occupation has long grown into a certainty' — while there was nothing to prevent a purchaser agreeing for one acre and writing down a hundred.8

What he could not envisage, and where he was to be proved wrong, was that the French Government would recognise such titles.9 He had given up Mr Service now, and was inclined to think of Victoria's renewed agitation for British possession of the group as an adolescent pressing of an unnecessary diplomatic question. He was impatient with company, settlers and missionaries who pressed him to help them compete with the French. An annual explanatory visit to these parts would do good, he felt as he put his own point of view at mission stations. The occupants, warm upon the Papist threat, were 'excluded in "a narrow ring of sense"' from year to year until they saw French plots, French convicts, behind every rock. He could not judge them harshly. However mild their success in conversion might be, missionaries like these deserved credit for lives made more difficult and dangerous 'by civilized men in the course of their trading and recruiting operations' than by 'the conditions of savage life only'.10

In conscience he could not sanction recruitment for New Hebrides plantations when there was no possible control over either the initial engagement or subsequent employment. Still less so, when prospective employers indicated that imported labourers would serve as bodyguards. The Tanamen slaughtered by Fijians near his own plantation in September

8Thurston to C.O., 5 November 1891 (confidential), CO225/36.
9Fragments of Empire, 219-27.
10Thurston to C.O., 5 November 1891 (confidential), CO225/36.
1871 were too vivid in his memory.11 As he told the Federal Council of Australasia in the course of arguments which, printed, confirmed him as the enemy of European development in the South Seas - removal from their homes was 'detrimental in the highest degree to the welfare of the islanders themselves'. He would have ended recruiting for Fiji if the small coconut planters could have afforded it. Without supervision, recruits would be crowded aboard ship without regard to safety or comfort. They would probably be kept on the plantations long beyond their agreed time, not necessarily in bad faith, but because pioneer planters often went bankrupt, and then their labourers were the last people to receive consideration.12

Still pressed by this politically powerful company, he invited directors' personal bonds in safeguard of labourers' rights. He was not surprised or disappointed when bonds were not forthcoming. Told by the Colonial Office that a blanket prohibition was an extreme course, he blandly assured his masters that he would indeed consider every application on its own merits - but from his knowledge of the New Hebrides, its white residents and the conditions under which labourers were employed, he would never feel able to grant any application which could be made at present.13 His masters let him follow his own tenacious bent. It was the same in the Western Pacific generally. Recruiting licences had been refused W. & A. McArthur in Samoa, for instance; and his friend J.T. Arundel had to go protestingly through a loophole to the Governor of New Zealand for licences to recruit for his scattered guano islands.

It was the same with the prohibition on the sale of arms, ammunition, dynamite and liquor, even though the effect was a particularly one-sided hampering of British trade in the Pacific. This High Commission prohibition policy, offered by Thurston to Krauel in 1885 as a model for all European powers involved in the Pacific, had found no enthusiastic imitators. The Germans after all were advised by their consular representative in western Melanesia, the trader Hersheim. What surprised Thurston was that the United States

11 Idem; and see _I, The Very Bayonet_, 161.
12 Thurston to Munro, 17 September 1891, VPP, 1891, VO.
13 Thurston to C.O., 7 June 1893, CO225/42; and see _Fragments of Empire_, 205–6.
of America, apostle of international morality, would not subject its own nationals to the oversight of British or French naval commanders which adherence to the Suva-inspired agreement would have entailed. He sent George H. Bates a Blue Book to show this cause of his failure 'to put down the curse of trade in alcohol & arms & ammunition in these fair waters', and then appealed to the formidable Mrs Bates:

Please tell her that not only does the American Government senselessly block my way in putting down robbery - murder & all abominations though it practically has no trading interests in the Western Pacific - but contrary to the Statute at Large, English built vessels cruise about here under American colours nominally owned by Americans - or soi-disant Americans, in order to evade the jurisdiction of the British High Cmmr. Just now when the Sovereign People are warm upon the subject of their 'Duties in Samoa' they might take up the wider question of their Duty in the Western Pacific.

His old acquaintance 'Colonel' Proctor was an example of what an American could get away with. Employed by the Australasian New Hebrides Company, Proctor shot a New Hebridean. Sent to Suva where there was no power to hold him as an American citizen, he retired to tranquil domesticity in New Orleans.

As Thurston had long before told the Colonial Office, High Commission trade prohibitions made it a very one-sided contest for British commerce - 'Ethics v. Business'. For purposes of debate in the early 1890s when the Federal Council of Australasia took up the Presbyterians' call for relaxation of the policy to offset the French, though, he was willing to doubt whether British nationals were in reality hamstrung in buying land there - unfortunately not, he thought as he reluctantly registered deeds purporting to record sales of entire coastlines. He would

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14 Fragments of Empire, 188-90.
15 Thurston to Bates, 3 April 1889, Bates Papers.
very strongly urge that if, in the lapse of time, it should so happen that British authority has a voice in the settlement of claims to land...in the Pacific such claims should be rejected...in all cases wherein it was shown that arms, ammunition, or intoxicants were the considerations moving in the purchase.17

There appeared to be a general consensus that sale of these articles was radically wrong. He did not think the interests, perhaps the very existence, of New Hebrideans should be disregarded simply because, unlike Tongans or Samoans, they had been unable to help protect themselves:

Such people are, I submit, very much in the same position as minors, and no transaction with them should be recognised by civilized authority unless the nature of such transactions can be justified by their honesty and propriety.18

As to the effect of firearms, he had often been assured that the indigenous bow was more deadly - but 'always found it difficult...to attach any weight to such niceties of choice as may lie between murder by arrow or by bullet'. He had also suspected that murders would have been less frequent if mission teachings had not been neutralised by the rifle.

In the New Hebrides, as elsewhere, one evil unchecked begets another. A dozen muskets or rifles or, maybe, a case or two, are to-day given in the purchase of a block of land.

The recipients do not want to admire, but to use, these arms. At one part of the coast the people hear that a tribe dwelling in the next bay has secured a supply of firearms. These people must also thereupon procure rifles for defence and offence. And so this miserable trade, originated and fostered by men subject to the jurisdiction of civilized states, goes merrily on....19

17 Thurston to Munro, 17 September 1891, VPP, 1891, VI; Fragments of Empire, 196.
18 Idem.
19 Idem.
Whatever Frenchmen were allowed to do in the New Hebrides they were forbidden to sell arms or liquor in New Caledonia.

The result of lack of international unanimity was messy enough. British traders were fined for dealing in rifles or gin by naval Deputy Commissioners on the evidence of American, German, Norwegian or French rivals whose own trade-stores were well stocked with these items. Less comic was what resulted from the absence of any strong local authority, indigenous or European, in Melanesia. When a European was killed, and provocation could not be proved, the only resort was 'act of war'. This meant a warship pounding the deserted coasts with gunfire, in that curiously unrelated manner so well satirised by Conrad, writing of Africa, in Heart of Darkness. The hope was that Islanders would recognize some rationality in this notional punishment. White victims received little sympathy from Thurston, unless they were old hands of known honesty who died as a result of wilful misunderstanding on Islanders' part. Too often whites resorting to the South Seas struck him as human flotsam of the seas or the prisons, or starry-eyed would-be planters who must expect to be blown up if, figuratively, they took unshielded lights into a powder-magazine.20

The only answer seemed to be the declaration of protectorates over islands within the British sphere - the south Solomon, Gilbert and Ellice Islands. A messy answer in itself, he thought. He had no love for protectorates. They were in vogue as a means of limiting responsibilities and quietening anti-colonial lobbies, but they left much in doubt about the protector's powers. He did not really know what a 'protectorate' was, and could find no lawyer able to tell him. 'My own opinion', he told Moss, 'is that if we want the place - or the place wants us we should hoist the flag on it. If the reverse - we should not meddle.'21

But there was little hope of Treasury's accepting financial responsibility for governing thousands of people in the British sphere. He was resigned to the half-heartedness of protectorates when he wrote privately to put a proposal for sorting out the Western Pacific's juridical confusion to the Secretary of State in mid-1892. He had delayed

20 Fragments of Empire, 167-75; Thurston to C.O., 20 January 1892, WPHC Despatches to S. of S.
21 Thurston to Moss, 28 October 1890, Moss Papers.
Plate 11 'King of the Western Pacific': Sir John Thurston as seen by T.W. Lindt, early 1890s.
putting his scheme forward, after returning from the New Hebrides, because of a report that hard-pressed Higginson had formed a large British company to exploit his hundreds of thousands of acres there. What eventuated was a wild-cat scheme involving floating half-a-million pounds in the City of London to buy out French interests, half this sum to go to Higginson personally—all of which 'permits one to see that "The Great South Sea" is still an expression to conjure with'.

It was a romance, as Thurston thought. Higginson got his money from the French Government the next year, with disastrous consequences for New Hebridean land rights.

The political and legal problems remained. Protectorates must try to solve them. The process of partitioning the Pacific between Germany, Britain and France had gone too far to stop. The idea of an 'Australian Sea' was an impossible one. The sooner division was carried to a conclusion, followed by real assumption of administrative responsibility, the better for all concerned. And since Germany had been pressing Britain along the same line in relation to the Gilbert Islands, he was informed, within a few days of writing this in May 1892, that a Protectorate flag was going up there. He cabled successfully to have the Ellice included and, writing privately again in June, urged annexation or protection of the southern Solomons.

As he supposed, that step was under discussion in London because Queensland, having theoretically suspended labour-recruiting in 1890, had now resumed it. His view could be very briefly put:

If those employed in the trade are honest they will not procure the men required. If they procure the men they will not, and cannot, be honest.

This of course was said in reference to the numbers sought by the dozen or so ships now fitting out in Queensland ports. A shipload or two was possible. Though he did not draw attention to it, Fiji herself still wanted Island labourers. She had lately hoped to tap supplies in the New Hebrides, where Tanese especially, much given to emigration, might be frustrated by the closing of Queensland. Trading for men at

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22 Thurston to Knutsford, 11 May 1892, CO225/40.
23 Idem, 22 June 1892, ibid.
regular ports of call, schooners rarely aroused more anger now than could easily be relieved by random shots at their boats.

But if they go beyond that dishonesty will most certainly arise, and there will be reprisals and 'outrages'.24

Above all, Melanesian populations would not stand the demographic strain. Planters spoke of the Solomon Islands and New Hebrides as though their shores teemed like India, but the fact was that the Islands have been half emptied during the last 30 years - and the next 20, if the traffic continues, will probably finish them.25

In August 1892 he said the same in an official despatch. If regulations were observed, the numbers could not be had; if the regulations were broken and the numbers got, the traffic would soon bring about its own end.26 Perhaps unduly pessimistic in that forecast, he made it from his feeling that to remove Islanders from their homes was to confer on them an almost unmitigated evil. It was said they could not be kept 'wrapped up', he noted in 1895 after going to the Solomons - but they never had been so:

From the days of Mendaña and Quiros to a comparatively late period, they have been attacked, robbed, and kidnapped (often to the alleged glory of God) by the large majority of Europeans (missionaries and modern naval officers excepted) who have fallen in with them.27

It had also been said that island life was no ideal one, that men naturally fled from cannibalism and fighting:

24 Idem.
25 Idem.
26 Thurston to C.O., 25 August 1892, WPHC Despatches of S. of S
27 Idem, 22 October 1895, CO225/49.
Even this I doubt. The ideal life of such natives is their own, not ours. When removed from their own ideal they too often die of nostalgia. War and cannibalism they look on as they do marrying and giving in marriage, canoe voyaging, planting, or any other incident in life as they know it.\textsuperscript{28}

Moreover, the weakening of a community by the emigration of its able-bodied men was the signal for its neighbours to attack. Nor was it his experience that warfare declined with the introduction of firearms given for or brought back by recruits. He did not think that on his return to the islands a man was much benefited by residence in a community like Queensland's - a community which...will allow him only to dig and delve so long as he stays in it, will allow him to attend church and even teach him to sing the doxology, but will not allow him to drive a cart or cab, to engage in mill work, or in domestic service.\textsuperscript{29}

His 1892 letter would not have moved his masters to declare a protectorate over the Solomon Islands even if it had been written in time; he had sent them despatches almost as powerful before. They rode out the recruiting storm, and only decided in December that year to hoist a Protectorate flag in fear that France, aroused by the Gilbert Islands Protectorate, might intervene in the Solomons - a possibility which Thurston had proposed to remove by letting France take all, or half, of the New Hebrides.\textsuperscript{30}

He would have to visit the Solomon Islands himself to inaugurate the Protectorate in the end. Meantime, he must return for a similar purpose to the haunts of his former self, the coconut oil trader, in the atolls around the Line.

\textsuperscript{28} Idem.
\textsuperscript{29} Idem.
\textsuperscript{30} Idem.

\textit{Fragments of Empire}, 252-6; Thurston to Knutsford, 11 May 1892, CO225/40.
Chapter 23

'The trail of the serpent'

'King of the Western Pacific', Thurston was to a disgruntled planter whom he would not trust with a labour-recruiting licence. He felt more like a waif on the water as he prepared to visit the Gilbert and Ellice Islands in mid-1893:

At this most anxious moment with Banks smashing - Home Rule Bill under discussion and the young Emperor of Germany flinging himself into the arms (apparently) of the Catholic party I feel as if I were plunging into the desert.¹

A volume of Indian Ocean voyages went with him. Reading while the sea capped white on H.M.S. Rapid's quarter, he felt in the soft air that he too might be sailing toOrmuz or Surat.² He was as receptive to beauty as when he first sailed this South Seas route thirty years before, in the James and the Star of Eve. Off Tamana in the Gilberts, the Rapid lay so close one night that he could hear laughter ashore through the surf. He talked with Tamana elders on the poop by the light of electric lamps placed in the mizzen rigging. The moon was full, the sea perfectly smooth.³

Very pretty, but this brief island-stopping was no way to inaugurate the Protectorate. 'I really see too little of these places and of the people', he complained at Tarawa in the journal he took up for the trip.⁴ His captain only wanted to put into an anchorage and be away again. Nor did

¹Thurston to Moss, 18 May 1893, Moss Papers; Grieg to Collet, 13 August 1896, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 96/297.
²Gilbert and Ellice Islands Journal, 25 June 1893.
³Ibid., 28 July 1893.
⁴Ibid., 14 July 1893.
he seem to like the High Commissioner's habit of bringing Island elders to dine at his table.\textsuperscript{5} It was fortunate that when the flag was actually hoisted by Captain E.H.M. Davis R.N. the previous year, this gallant and energetic officer — so appreciatively if amusingly described by Thurston, upon seeing a photograph of H.M.S. Royalist's captain along with those of Hawaiian notables in the house of a tweed-clad Hawaiian mission teacher on Maiana — had dealt with most of the claims and counter claims between Islanders and the few white residents.\textsuperscript{6}

His Gilbertese largely forgotten, Thurston picked up at Maiana the trader-interpreter he had recommended to Davis. Robert Corrie, 'bronzed like a Spaniard', reminded him of his own past. They had met on Rotuma in 1865, when Corrie was one of the ship-wrecked crew of the Margaret Thompson. Sentiment took Thurston to Mataso on Rotuma on the way back, to revisit the spot where he had swum ashore from the Star of Eve.

In the Line atolls, where he had first walked among Pacific Islanders in 1862, he looked for change over the thirty years since he had seen Te Kaia of Abaiang, scarred from stingray spears, come aboard to buy firearms. There was that same old Gilbertese look of ferocity, greatly in contrast with the gentler Ellice people's habitual expression. Hearing the schoolchildren of Maiana sing for him, he nonetheless felt the Gilbertese were softened by even a slight admixture of western culture. The trouble was that the general upshot of this admixture was a 'mongrel civilization' which he detested. It came from the trade-goods brought in by the schooners from Sydney and San Francisco; from the influence of 'these pitiful old blackguards' the beachcombers who came to him with their lifestories of wreck, mutiny, and a lost existence under the palms, as well as complaints of trade-stores broken into or debts unpaid: this was 'the rotten pestilential civilization of the trader'.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., 3 July 1893, and Thurston to C.O., 11 September 1893, WPHC Despatches to S. of S.; a copy of Davis's printed report is in RNAS 18; cf Fragments of Empire, 256-7.

\textsuperscript{6}Gilbert and Ellice Islands Journal, 3 July 1893.

\textsuperscript{7}Ibid., passim.
This 'trail of the serpent', as he called it, was over the assembly in the maneaba at Tapiteuea which heard him explain that all men white and black were now equal before the Queen's law.

Maneaba large and full - Men, women, children - all ages. All talking - just like a rookery - Republic - Men generally dressed in old garments - Coats, trousers, hat. Very dirty and unpicturesque.8

At least the government by clan-heads which underlay this 'republicanism' in the Ellice and much of the Gilbert group made for simple, effective administration by Island Councils. There were mission-inspired laws in plenty for him to codify. He welcomed it all in his official reports but dwelt privately on the serpent's trail.

It showed especially at Butaritari, local headquarters of the four trading firms. Here a 'King' wearing a succession of uniforms received him in a gimcrack wooden 'palace'. The King boasted a thirty-man guard in U.S. Army uniforms - and debts outstanding to Wightman Bros and Crawford & Co. of San Francisco. A transitional civilization, imitative and degraded, Thurston thought it, a 'miserable, pitiable, monkey-like state'. Previously the people had been happy with their mats, their solvency and their 'old time savage cleanliness'.9 At Abemama, ten-year-old King Paul at least seemed to feel a warranted irritation with the chair and clothes in which his elders confined him to meet the Kovana.10 Paul's predecessor, the fat, impotent but formidable Tem Binoka, one-time host of Stevenson, had filled the 'palace' with chiming clocks and his armoury with Winchester rifles. He had nonetheless retained a sense of values sufficient to enable him to scale his suppliers. 'He cheat a litty', Tem Binoka would say of one trader; of another, 'He cheat plenty'; and of a third, 'I think he cheat too much'.11

They were all cheats to Thurston - purveyors for profit

8 Ibid., 7 July 1893.
9 Ibid., 20 July 1893.
10 Ibid., 4 July 1893.
11 Robert Louis Stevenson, In the South Seas (London, 1900), 283.
of the 'mummery of the white men'. And he was not sure Christianity was not part of that mummery, especially with the Hawaiian teachers of the Hawaiian Board of Missions, who had a spiritual monopoly in the northern Gilbert Islands. These teachers' excesses were power-seeking and corruption. But their counterparts among the L.M.S. Samoan pastors and the French priests of the intruding Sacred Heart Mission had their small absurdities too. He was appealed to by the religion-jaded people of Butaritari. They wanted relief from the length of their church services which might last four hours as one preacher after another insisted on bearing witness to his personal knowledge of the Lord. 'They liked it', he paraphrased informants, 'but the people didn't.' He could believe that. The greater trouble was that here, as in Rotuma in the old days or Fiji now, the God of Luther and He of the Sacred Heart were not like lion and lamb, lying down together. As he put it to the Colonial Office, whenever conflicting missions came into contact,

men professing a common object are too often credulous in the highest degree of every evil rumour and exaggeration that may reach them in respect of each other; and...men, who in the ordinary and everyday affairs of life appear to be amiable and reasonable beings, present themselves, under the influence of sectarian differences, as wrongheaded and strongheaded bigots.

He saw on Tapiteuea for instance, how one group would espouse a purely secular cause for the sake of making converts. 'And he is fortunate', he summed up for his masters and his eventual successors, 'who by the exercise of patience, tact, and a firm independence makes the best that is possible out of an unfortunate situation.'

The 'best' was to encourage missionaries to keep out of one another's way. In the secular realm, it was to clamp down on traders who held Butaritari in particular in thrall by peculiar means. Their jargon described it as the 'clip

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12 Gilbert and Ellice Islands Journal, 20 July 1893.
13 Idem.
14 Thurston to C.O., 16 July 1894, WPHC Despatches to S. of S.
15 Idem.
system'. An Islander got credit by giving a trader the right to take nuts from his land. The debt might be repaid four-fold, Thurston was told by one trading-agent who felt business could be done without the 'clip'.\textsuperscript{16} The upshot was that Islanders had become 'slaves to a few miserable whitemen whose objects in life are cajoling and concubinage', with sometimes the additional object, as one man put it to him, of squeezing out his money and letting the islands go to hell.\textsuperscript{17} Actually the amounts owing were less than enslaving, and the Islanders' attitude far from subservient. However that might be, the \textit{Kovana} left the Tarawa people, for one group, in no doubt that he was not going to be a traders' debt collector. He agreed fully with the 'King' of Butaritari that the hotel there should be closed.\textsuperscript{18}

A very indirect Protectorate, working through high chiefs and councils, this was to be, in Thurston's intention, while Europeans were kept tightly responsible to the new Pacific Order in Council 1893. 'Indirect' meant taking the High Chief of Abaiang aside for a lecture on his drunkenness. Then Thurston sat in judgement upon one Komaji - 'a fat determined wicked eyed fellow'. Notoriously a troublemaker even by Abaiang standards, he 'admitted to having used his wife as a target for a new revolver and put seven bullets out of ten into her'.\textsuperscript{19} Deported to long-suffering Rotuma, Komaji wrote complaining that it was really all the drunken King's fault because he had coveted another of the wicked-eyes fellow's wives.\textsuperscript{20} That raised the question of adultery, on which Thurston found both Gilbert and Ellice Islanders much exercised. Let them agree which of their existing laws on this and other matters they wanted to keep, and he would codify them, he said as he left with relief for Fiji via Rotuma.\textsuperscript{21}

These old haunts would be easy enough to administer but they were not places he much liked now. He felt similar

\textsuperscript{16}Gilbert and Ellice Islands Journal, 20 July 1893.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 14 and 20 July 1893.
\textsuperscript{18}WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 94/22, 25, 27, 105-6.
\textsuperscript{19}Gilbert and Ellice Islands Journal, 17 July 1893.
\textsuperscript{20}Komaji to Thurston, 29 August 1893, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 93/208.
\textsuperscript{21}Gilbert and Ellice Islands Journal, \textit{passim}.
regrets about the 'mongrel' quality of the civilization which thirty years had helped to produce in Rotuma. In three days and two nights ashore there he saw Riamkau's son, feasted, exchanged presents, and was avoided by the resident Marist priest. His old friends around Faguta could not call their time their own when the priest was away from the altar, he gathered; the nunnery had barred windows and a French Mother Superior who by all accounts was a terror. He saw Rotuma for the last time on 7 August 1893, thinking sadly about the independent-minded people who had sailed with him when he was young:

General view of Rotumah is that in many respects it has not improved. The people are certainly a most mongrel lot.22

A gloomy enough conclusion after nearly fourteen years of rule from Suva, following Rotuma's annexation in 1880. When he thought about what Ratu Epeli Nailatikau and Ratu Peni Tanoa were up to, though, he was inclined to apply the first part of this judgement to Fiji as well.

At least the second part did not apply. Fijians were not a mongrel lot. Nor should it apply to the people of the Solomon Islands - certainly not to the New Georgia head-hunters. He was going to visit them next year on another protectorate-establishing visit. At least Ellice and Gilbertese political structures had lent themselves to tax-raising. New Georgia would be difficult: 'How I am going to extract a revenue from these gentle savages is by no means clear to me except in the way of Head hunting licences and I suppose this wont do.'23

No revenue could be raised except by licensing European traders, as he confirmed during his cruise through the Solomon Islands between September and November 1894. Nor did he think it possible to attempt regular government. A resident Deputy Commissioner was required, to watch recruiting and stop the fire-arms still shipped in from Sydney labelled 'hollow-ware'. He might attempt piecemeal pacification, with the help of the naval commanders who in the past couple of seasons had been directing their gunfire at canoe-houses in

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22 Idem.

23 Undated fragment, Kew Letters.
the hope that their head-hunting proprietors would take the hint. Of course, this should be done under supervision from Suva, not from Port Moresby as that presuming fellow MacGregor had been suggesting. The Deputy Commissioner might perhaps be C.M. Woodford, one-time collector there for the British Museum. Thurston had helped him get to the Solomon Islands in the '80s and received a private application for the Deputy's post from him now. He rather doubted Woodford's seriousness but took his book *A Naturalist Among the Head-hunters* with him when little H.M.S. *Ringdove* cleared Suva's reef for the Solomons on 8 September 1894.

Voyages were tedious to him now. He needed his books. He had Domeny de Rienzi's *Oceani* with him too, exchanged with Bishop Vidal for Labillardière's *Voyage in search of La Pérouse* during a truce. He had Dillon's *Narrative*, and a journal of the Mendaña expedition which impressed him with the number of Solomon Islanders the Spaniards had killed to the greater glory of God. God was now represented by the Melanesian Mission. Its lately-retired head, Bishop J.R. Selwyn, had just been imprudent enough to tell the Royal Colonial Institute that the High Commissioner had been pretty much of a failure in the Solomon Islands. So had his Mission, if the picture of it in Thurston's journal had more than jaundice in it - as some subsequent events indicate the picture had.

He noted lackadaisical teachers in cast-off European clothes, tiny congregations, a dirty mission ship and a very casual air shown by converts to their rarely seen white missionaries, when he boarded the *Southern Cross* fastidiously off Guadalcanal. Pressed to go her rounds with the mission ship in the *Ringdove*, he declined to bolster the Mission in that way and subjected Selwyn's rather green young successor to a withering attack. If Selwyn complained about Suva's failure to convict a particular trader for his known violence, why hadn't the Bishop come to Fiji to give the evidence which might have gaoloed the man? And how could he be so certain

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24 Solomon Islands Journal, Thurston Papers; and Thurston's reports in WPHC Despatches to S. of S.; see also *Fragments of Empire*, 258-70.
25 Thurston to C.O., 30 March 1894, WPHC Despatches to S. of S.; Solomon Islands Journal.
26 Ibid., *passim*.
that attacks on his Christian villages were due to Christians' helping the naval commanders? 'The natives hated the mission. That was neither secret nor anything new...'. As for the new man's belief that he could safely leave his Nggela teachers unvisited for ten years, he must be green indeed. They were among the biggest rascals in the group.27

There was fun to be had in demolishing the mythology surrounding Bishop Patteson's death at Nakupu, Santa Cruz. Legend had him killed in revenge for kidnapping by a Fiji recruiting vessel. This was a conventional account which Thurston had always doubted. He spoke with the Reverend A.E.C. Forrest. After several years of pederasty at Santa Cruz, Forrest believed his unusually intimate Island informants when they told him Patteson was (1) unquestionably killed by people from the main land [of Santa Cruz] and not by the Nukapu people (2). The motive was jealousy and anger because the Bishop gave a present to the Nukapu Chief and either a smaller one or none at all to the Santa Cruz man who conceived himself the more important personage.28

There was La Pérouse to remember at Vanikoro, and Dillon's village names to check against current ones at Tikopia. People here were 'very like Rotumans 30 years ago, but not so clean nor is their long hair so fine'.29 There was legend to pursue at Wanderer Bay on Guadalcanal, where he photographed the spot where people told him their fathers had speared Ben Boyd. And there was the present-day to explain to the spear-wielders' sons. No more sorcery, raiding, assassinations, he warned.

There was also fun to be had stalking Europeans arms-dealing and spurious purchasers of land. He sought out the resident partner in one of the small Sydney firms trading in the group, Thomas Woodhouse, whom he found sick under the shade of his verandah. 'Said to have shot more natives than

27 Ibid., 3 October 1894; Thurston to C.O., 28 February 1895, WPHC Despatches to S. of S.
28 Solomon Islands Journal, 4 November 1894; for Forrest, see WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 98/336, 99/52.
29 Solomon Islands Journal, 13 September 1894.
any other man in the group.' Woodhouse had just been successfully prosecuted in Suva on a milder matter, keeping his Island crew beyond their time. Like most island traders when Thurston combined his jocular tone with his cold-eyed stare, Woodford was willing to talk for the Grand Panjandrum's notebook - though he piously maintained that 'hollow-ware' was usually sold by foreigners like the Swede Svenson and the Frenchman Peter Pratt Edmunds, alias Edmond Pratt, not by the High Commissioner's law-abiding subjects.31

'French Peter' had made his enforced pilgrimage by war-ship to Suva too. In his case, it was on a charge of shooting an Islander. He had got off for want of evidence.32 He was 'by all accounts the most piratical ruffian in the group'. Thurston noted this with a certain satisfaction as Pratt boarded the Ringdove on 19 October bringing two good written answers on the land and crew matters which were currently charges against him. They were intended to confuse. His Excellency's wide experience of the Western Pacific would enable him to understand how hard it was for these benighted Islanders to accustom themselves to regular work, said Pratt (who's wife was a Roviana Lagoon woman). And so it had come about that twelve new crew 'boys' recruited under licence issued by the Governor of New South Wales (who knew as much about what he was doing as the man in the moon) had deserted, then had apparently been killed by the people they took refuge among. As for the land on the Roviana Lagoon, about which Pratt rightly understood the local big-man Ingava to have approached the Kovana, the fact was simply that Pratt's trading rival, Kelly, had incited Ingava to get Pratt off land he had properly purchased.33

'A clever, able, very plausible person of great energy', Thurston summed up Pratt, 'and no doubt (and by his own admission) of a quick passionate temper.' Such a temper Thurston too could show, and his hyperbole was coming out. When one of Pratt's Solomon Island witnesses threatened others while the Kovana was hearing the case, Thurston 'warned

30Ibid., 18 September 1894.
31Ibid.; Fragments of Empire, 164.
32Ibid., 163-4.
33Solomon Islands Journal, 19 October 1894: WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 94/307.
this fellow that if he played tricks with me he would be shot on sight'.

It seemed clear that the crew had been killed, after making trouble, at the instigation of Pratt's wife's brother - and very likely on a hint from Pratt himself. The land or its nuts had been given by the owners for the use of Pratt's children, until the Protectorate's declaration encouraged Pratt to think of representing this agreement as outright transfer to himself. 'A man such as for his own sake should never live beyond the limits of strong legal & executive authority', Thurston assessed French Peter in his journal. He hoped he had brought a foreshadowing of some such authority to Roviana Lagoon during a week of meetings with its people.

Vignettes of Solomon Islanders went into his journal: an assassin of a labour-recruiter who quietly sauntered out of one meeting after being assured by a neighbour that certainly his name would be on the list of Solomon Islander badhats which, from under his tree, the Kovana had just announced he possessed; the spear handed over by Ingava in token that he no longer needed it - except to capture delinquents like Pratt's wife's brother whom Thurston commissioned Ingava to arrest; and the way Ingava amused himself summing up the traders he knew while testing the Kovana's perception of men with shrewd, humourous glances beneath half-lowered eyelids.

But pessimism and a sense of alienation went into Thurston's journal too. The personal serpent he carried within himself liked order, cleanliness, deference, and chiefs worthy of the name by virtue of the power they exercised. These things were not much in evidence in the Solomon Islands. He met no one like Riamkau of Rotuma, no handsome, magnetic man of authority like Ratu Golea to identify with. Na Kena Vai's new people possessed seamanlike canoes and had shown him a neat line in fishing - this time without demanding payment, which was novel for them. But they struck him as a century 'behind' Fijians. Rounding beautiful Savo Island, he was moved to think how deceptive were appearances. Ashore he had just been talking with a big-man who lived in fear of a rival who was trying to compass his death through sorcery because he wanted one of Thurston's informant's wives: 'I saw

34 Solomon Islands Journal, 20 October 1894; and see trial-notes at beginning of journal.
35 Ibid., passim.
the Chief's wives and thought he ought to be obliged to anyone who wd carry them off'.\textsuperscript{36} There was more of the 'mongrel' than he had expected to see - European clothes, short clay pipes clenched in teeth even when there was no tobacco. Blasphemy was used freely, without awareness, to express affirmation, comprehension, emphasis or surprise. As a man of Tikopia put it when Thurston asked whether Tikopia people ever visited nearby Vanikoro: 'My God!! Too much bloody bow and arrow.'\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., 23-4 September 1894.

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., 13 September 1894.
'Business on which it is difficult to speak'

'Mind greatly relieved today and yesterday', Thurston recorded on 15 September 1894, en route to the Solomons. His depression had originated in Fiji, in events on Vanua Levu's mountain range along the border between Macuata and Cakaudrove. This was a difficult border because a more than usually arbitrary one, introduced by the colonial order. Since Cession, the peoples on either side had changed allegiance from one provincial centre to another. In June 1894 the border district worrying him was Seaqaqa. This was a district of blue blood, fount of many chiefs, so the meke claimed. And there, unlike Bau, Jone Cositeni had no little birds to hint that muscular men would not accept imprisonment in reed houses unless certain grievances were redressed - though the provincial councils had been buzzing with rumour.

He did not need hints from Seaqaqa, however, to tell him some Fijians thought the system he represented was out-dated. A 'young party' existed among a new generation of chiefs, and it could call on sympathy from the older one. Ratu Jone Colata had once allowed himself to be represented by lawyers in the old government's courts so that he might be permitted to drink without restriction - and sell land, and barter away his country. Ratu Marika Toroca, his contemporary, now liked to pose as patron of the new 'young party' which hankered to shake off certain restrictions, and to pay taxes in cash. Thurston was resigned to the posing of the ageing, the impatience of the young. Sending the high ranking young Bau

1Solomon Islands Journal, 15 September 1894.
2E.g., encls des Voeux to C.O., 14 and 21 June 1382, C083/30; FCSO 84/2519, 2889, 85/254, 87/1975, 90/396, 92/3844.
3I, the Very Bayonet, 184.
4Ratu Marika to Thurston, 10 March 1894, FCSO 94/1065, (encl. 94/1350), with minutes.
chief Ratu Savenaca Seniloli as Magistrate to Cakaudrove would be creating a very young party there, he reflected. Let it be so, though. Thurston himself remained basically conservative, however. When it came to relations between chiefs and commoners, what caused him anxiety is that the Commoner is asserting himself too rapidly, and is shaking off his obedience to his Chief not only in respect of what may be wrong on the Chief's part, but also in respect of what it is right for the Chief to order or forbid.

If on the other hand you wanted an instance of new, wholly justified independence, commoner Josefa Tawaki was very properly refusing to convict a man in the Bauan domain of Moturiki who would not make copra for Ratu Epeli Nailatikau.

Thurston agreed with his young Turks when, in enthusiasm for what passed for modernisation, they expressed aversion to tauvu and the rights of the vasu. Thereabouts he stopped. He wanted no more thoroughgoing changes in values, even during the time of the younger men he met at councils - no speeding up of any process towards 'individualism'. He felt this could not be reached within who knew how many generations, and it might prove a mixed blessing even then. At any rate individualism did not represent what he, doubtless presumptuously, identified as the best in Fijian societies - their cohesion, sense of corporate pride and community identity.

Nor would he have approved of what developed soon after his death. The lawyer Humphrey Berkeley, sophisticated, cynical successor to William Fillingham Parr, got support from disillusioned, disgraced former members of the Fijian Administration in petitioning 'King Dick' Seddon, Island-grabbing Premier of New Zealand, for Fiji's final incorporation with the successors of the gigantic moa. Prominent among the disillusioned was Ratu Savenaca Rodomodo. A son of Thurston's one-time comrade-in-arms Ratu Dranibaka, Ratu Savenaca put the case for an end to Thurston's system in terms of the peace and quiet which would surely follow. He told a fellow

5 Minute 24 July 1894, FCSO 94/3035.
6 Thurston to C.O., 13 December 1894 (confidential), CO83/59.
7 Idem.
canvasser for the petition:

Should any Chief say, 'It was the practice in former times to work' reply as follows - 'Go and kill someone, if you are not put on your trial for doing so then what you say is true, and we should continue to work, but on the other hand if you are arrested we should be relieved of these heavy burdens for the present age is a different one.'

But it only came to these petitions, and to refusal to work for taxes in kind, when there was no longer a fluent Fijian speaker at Government House. No man after Thurston could successfully meet Fijians' sophistry with combined joke and half-serious threat, remind them of what had happened to their fathers and beg them to believe that Fijians' salvation continued to lie in following the modified customs of their forefathers. They, in their way, had known how to work.

Work in Thurston's and Ratu Savenaca's time meant especially that production of taxes in sugar, copra, maize and coffee which so efficiently and, as it might seem, repressively, bound the Fijian people to the land. Village life was not always entrancing. Nor was travel to and work in the canefields, or lugging maize or tobacco down slippery tracks, a lighter task than clearing or cutting for Europeans. When the season was bad or overseas prices low there might be less reward in working for oneself than for planters. They had to pay wages or face the Governor's displeasure.

All this Thurston knew; but he remained too impressed by the half-empty villages and the migratory bands of helots he recognised as alternatives, to be sympathetic. He did introduce better strains of cotton and coffee and employed Indians to show how rice could be grown, sending circulars out telling the Rokos how he hoped the colony could be made self-sufficient in rice by Fijian effort. He enticed European capital and expertise in tobacco growing with the intention that Fijians should profit. For the rest, the tax-system must stand; its fall would make wage-slaves of Fijians.

8 Ratu Savenaca to Ratu J.V. Banivalu, n.d. [1901], FCSO: Deportation of Natives, Case 23, 01/4867.
9 FCSO 91/405.
He would take cash only as an earnest of produce coming in later. People who pleaded the sogginess of their soil were told to persist with cane notwithstanding; if they really doubted it would get the C.S.R. Co's ten shillings a ton, they should grow maize also and hope for a double refund. Often enough they got it.

While Fijians' produce paid £104,564 into the colonial treasury during 1889-1893, £37,791 came back to them for spending, say, on boats. The Macuata coast had a cutter for every ten miles. Thurston would not have objected if the number had been doubled, reflecting a stimulus to exertion. More went on church building and donations to the Wesleyan Missionary Society, more again on the hardware, tinned meat and drapery without which Fijian life was now uncomfortable. A little more cash came from leases, and additionally there was some planting directly for the market. The Australasian fruit market so dominated the banana growing people around Navua that Thurston sometimes felt overmuch money in Fijian hands was destructive of the good old ways of the land. That was the typical reaction of the conservative - but his system served them, nonetheless. So dependent were the Navua people on money that, when the banana market contracted in the mid-1890s, they asked their Serua provincial council for permission to plant extra cane for the mills. Serua province delivered produce worth £800 against its £310 assessment for 1895; its banana-producing neighbour Nadroga paid £1,000 in cane against £800 assessed and still had tobacco and maize in hand.

But refunds themselves caused trouble. How much money reached the producers? How much stuck to the fingers of the officials in the Fijian Administration? Sexual peccadilloes and the pursuit of old political ends aside, their cardinal sin remained peculation. One Namata correspondent thought the division so unfair that it were better refunds should be held over against next year's taxes.

In practice this seemed to be happening. The money often did not come back to the provinces until long after the financial year had closed. As a result, people preferred to get instant trade by selling to a storekeeper, rather than

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10 FCSO 92/1023; Thurston's minute 5 February 1891, FCSO 91/368.
11 FCSO 95/228, 2858.
'They declare', he told Gordon, 'I believe them, that they only wanted to be under Cakaudrove and went about it in the old way.'

As one of the Caumurimuri bete confirmed, they looked to Wailevu in Cakaudrove province across the border, as they had kinship ties with Buli Wailevu and his people. With one of these, the Seaqaqa-born chief Ramasieli, they had agreed they would defy Naduri and go over to Wailevu. This course their recent forebears would have found as natural as fighting the war that would have followed. The spark for a more violent coup had been provided by another Seaqaqa chief, young Yacadra. Proposing to make a name for himself along with a principality, Yacadra had taken a tabua to the noted former warleader Qaranivalu, turaga ni koro of Calalevu, urging him to kill the Macuata chief who in 1891 had replaced an aged Seaqaqa dignitary as Buli Seaqaqa. That decision disposed of the more cautious Ramasieli. As Thurston learned from him on landing at Naduri, 'when he found the pigheaded "qasis" - a so called bete or two - and a few swash-bucklers were determined to commit murder - Ramasieli withdrew...'. He was already in trouble with Cakaudrove Provincial Council. The leading swash-buckler remained Yacadra. He had intended to mingle his own men with the Macuata force he had expected the Roko would immediately send against Caumurimuri. Then he would have created confusion within the attacking ranks.

Not a bad plan, Thurston reflected, when three hours' firing by the A.N.C. under Ratu Epeli Vakacaracra had reduced Caumurimuri. Seven were shot on Qaranivalu's side, and there were two suicides. In panic Yacadra had offered to kill Qaranivalu, then twice attempted to cut his own throat. The plan might have worked, but for Roko Tui Macuata's refusal to be stampeded. As it was, Thurston could point the moral when he addressed the crowded rara at Naduri afterwards.

18 Thurston to Stanmore, fragment, BM Add MSS 49204.
19 Evidence of Saimone, Case 12, 94/2536.
20 Case 12.
21 Thurston to Stanmore, fragment, BM Add MSS 49204.
22 Macuata Provincial Council Book, 17 May 1894.
23 Thurston to C.O., 16 July 1894, C083/59.
The past had better be allowed to sleep. Only swift death came from reawakening it.\(^{25}\) As for the Christian present, he thought privately, he must have a word with Mr Langham about the tickets of Wesleyan Society membership found in Qaranivalu's bible.\(^{26}\) He told Gordon:

The lotu just now is suffering from reaction. The pendulum went over pretty far on one side at the beginning, and is now swinging back a bit.\(^{27}\)

Ordering eager volunteers from Cakaudrove and Bua back disappointed to their dull gardens, he returned to Suva to hang Qaranivalu and another. He commuted the death sentences passed on four others. Then he dealt in the more subtle way he preferred with incorrigible Ratu Epeli Nailatikau. The Roko Tui Tailevu and Lomaiviti had hoped to find Thurston so embarrassed by these distressing necessities that he could at last be outfaced. For as Thurston told the *Bosevakaturaga* when it opened on 26 June, his friends there might spare him the pain of saying much about his past few days. All there knew he had just been to Vanua Levu 'upon business on which it is difficult to speak'.\(^{28}\)

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\(^{26}\) Langham to Worrall, 'Thursday', MOM 295.

\(^{27}\) Thurston to Stanmore, fragment, loc.cit.

\(^{28}\) *Bosevakaturaga*, 1894.
Chapter 25

'You are his son and therefore do you decide'

It was an engrossing Bosevakaturaga, this meeting of June 1894 in the grounds of Vale Levu. Domestic matters were up for discussion - the age-old hunger of chiefs for ladies from prestigious Bau, for instance, as a result of which there was bad blood over Adi Litia Cakobau's marrying Ratu Peni Tanoa rather than Ro Tui Sawau; the shutting away of girls in nunneries; and the question of whether there was immorality among pupils in the schools at large. A general complaint went up, led by Ratu Lala, that even now too many useful men were away as labourers, and too many old people were left unattended in half empty villages. Should Native Stipendiary Magistrates be regularly moved from province to province, speakers wondered? It was better for the province but uncomfortable for the magistrate. Should presumptuous people be allowed to build yavu as high as the chiefs? Buli-Roko Serua had stopped a man who wanted one as high as the outraged old man's thigh. Powerful, thoughtful speakers were there, like Jonacani Dabea, Niko Rabuko, Ratu Neimani Dreu. It was Ratu Neimani, his thatch-burning rodents quiet now, who first acclaimed the news that Thurston's term had been extended for another five years. 'Let the present Governor remain with us till we old men are dead', he said 'then let them send a younger man out here who will suit the young men.'

This was Thurston's last meeting, though he had no inkling of it. He promised a new industrial school near Suva, one that would teach English and be especially for 'young men of intelligence and good family' suited to holding office 'under our Native Government and Polity'. He expected to do more. Yet when he came into the house again on 5 July his speech had an unintentional valedictory ring. He wanted them to remember that for twenty years they had been trying together to do what had never been attempted elsewhere - run

1Bosevakaturaga, 1894.
the country through its indigenous owners. If they the owners wanted a material index of the success achieved, then he knew that Roko Tui Tailevu, Roko Tui Cakaudrove and Roko Tui Rewa would remember how in the 1860s Fiji could not raise £9,000 to pay off the Americans, whereas during the past seventeen years £77,807 had been refunded from taxes. Their land too was safe - though he must speak of the trouble they were causing the Lands Commissioners who were trying to settle boundaries. It in no way surprised him that informants were reluctant to give precise answers, since in the past to raise questions about land was to invite the club; but the final settlement of boundaries which they so resisted would in the long run make it easier to decide disputes.

It was an agreeable, urbane occasion. He invited Roko Tui Tailevu to witness thirty years back:

Now when I first knew Ratu Epeli, when he was quite a young man, he will recollect that he was worried out of his life...because there was no law....

But if their eyes met, both men may have found it hard to sustain the gaze in friendship. The past five years had shown that no combination of lecture, appeal or financial assistance would make Ratu Epeli live as he must if he was going to stay within the limits of Thurston's great forbearance. When Ratu Epeli took six thousand coconuts from Sawaleke in 1890 though trees were still torn from the '89 hurricane and taxes were unpaid, Thurston was inclined to think this was lawful lala; but he was irritated next year over money wasted in repairs to Ratu Epeli's three vessels. Governor and Roko had met in June 1891, both acrimonious over repairs to the Lurline. Ratu Epeli proposed to pay for them with a £100 sweetener he received in return for a contract under which four districts were to supply 2,000 fathoms of firewood. After sleeping on it Thurston still felt that Ratu Epeli was acting in bad faith. He could pay men to fulfil the contract, but must not levy their labour as his father's son.

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2 Idem.
3 Minute 24 November 1890, FCSO 90/3540.
4 Minute 21 May 1891, FCSO 91/1465 (encl. in 91/1084).
5 Minute 23 June 1891, FCSO 93/2867.
'Custom' would not excuse everything. Ratu Epeli had pleaded it as his charter to levy on Naitasiri for help in entertaining Cakaudrove visitors at Bau; Thurston replied that Epeli was violating custom by stretching it. He had wanted to hold solevu at provincial councils after Thurston had decreed they be abolished. He was bitter at the veto from Vale Levu, and then had elicited a weary 'I am very sorry if the Roko has been disappointed for I am his true friend but he & not I have caused that disappointment'. In April 1894 Thurston had Epeli told that he would not require him to surrender his liquor permit in recompense for the last Christmas orgies at Bau, but he would not renew it when it fell due. He intended to try and see once and for all whether Ratu Epeli could be brought to understand that he was subject to law, Cakobau's son or no - 'and in the meantime I earnestly counsel him to amend his ways'.

To what avail amend his ways? - thought Ratu Epeli. He was chafing at Bau when his forefathers had ranged over Fiji. He was obliged by law to seek approval before he bought boats or entered into contracts, as if people were not chiefs' property. He had to sit by while the upstart Ratu Marika leased land to the C.S.R. Co., permitting little of the rent to reach Bau. Obviously Fijians were dying out, felt Ratu Epeli. If they could only sell land outright, they would at least be able to make their last years comfortable. So he agreed with his European drinking companions at the Club Hotel, and accepted their confidences about the happy lot of the Maori who could indeed sell land to buy clothes, tinned food and liquor.

He was ready for open rebellion at the beginning of July 1894, when Thurston held out the prospect of dismissal and exile. He thought he would call Jone's bluff by resigning out of hand, which would deadlock the provincial administration. And so Thurston summoned him back. He came, hinting he would contest the Governor's right to bring a high chief to account

6 Minutes 13 June and 21 August 1891, FCSO 91/2429.
7 Minute 29 November 1892, FCSO 92/3478.
8 Minute 5 April 1894, FCSO 94/1212 (encl. 95/4598).
9 Turpin's 'Journal and Narratives' shows him drinking with Ratu Epeli; see again Nemo in the Polynesian Gazette, 8 December 1894 (cutting at FCSO 94/383) which quotes the happy Maori's blissful situation, and see also, below, p.302.
for conduct within his own province, but found Thurston had strengthened himself by calling in Ratu Neimani Dreu, Ratu Tevita Rasuraki and Ratu Erone Logamoce. Before this phalanx Ratu Epeli submitted, and wrote Thurston a letter combining formal penitence with thinly veiled resentment. He felt his rebuke painfully, he said, delivered as it had been before his fellow chiefs. It was true Thurston had done Ratu Epeli and his father services which could never be forgotten; true too that Epeli had made promises he soon broke; even true that some of his actions indicated a dislike of British rule. But this was mere appearance. How could he exalt himself above Ratu Cakobau his father, King of Fiji, who had given away Fiji? Truly, he knew it had been beneficial to himself and the country.

This was a formal submission, and Thurston replied equally formally, to put his own attitude on record. His complaint was that Ratu Epeli had levied heavily, not in places which were directly subject to him, but at semi-independent Sawaieke.

But besides this your 'lala' of food from places in Lomai Viti has also been heavy and repugnant to the old customs of the land - Cases have been reported where you have 'lavaki'd' food and then sold it - where you have secured yau at a Solevu and sold it to a storekeeper. This behaviour is oppressive and unchieflike. Other rokos had lost office for doing it. Ratu Epeli must observe the limitations laid down in Regulation IV of 1877 which his father had helped make and had kept for the rest of his life. Under this, money could be levied for good purposes - purchasing boats, building churches - but only after full discussion. Epeli had taken £60 from the refunds to help pay for the tombstone now being erected to his father:

You may say that the people gave it.

Yes they gave it through fear of you their Chief, but they hate this sort of thing and they complain about it....

As I have said to you the whole 'vanua' when it speaks its mind says very hard things of your rule.

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10 Thurston to C.O., 16 July 1894, CO83/94.
wait months for the proceeds of government's higher price. When, contrary to all government principles, the European Stipendiary Magistrates were made members of the provincial boards of assessment and could ensure that money was not distributed at the provincial centre but sent to villages for sharing, there was some improvement. Buli/Roko Serua complained that he only got £3 whereas in the past he had been sure of £10. But the flood of circulars that went out to Rokos in the early 1890s, directing careful village accounting both of payment and refund, is not likely to have met the case where Europeans did not supervise. At last, in 1895, Namata began to publish details of refunds due to individual villages - where they were known. With the village now made the official unit of assessment and enabled to sell its surplus without waiting for the rest of the province, Lomaiviti at any rate (sophisticated, close to Levuka) came very much more to life commercially. It took surpluses to the contractor whereas in the past its people had gone to rival warehouses for immediate cash.

Another problem was to arrive at fair assessment of provinces in terms of area, fertility, suitability of soil to profitable crops and numbers of male taxpayers. It was probably never solved. Copra growing provinces complained about the refunds going to cane producing Ba; while the Ba people persisted in the belief that to cut copra was immeasureably lighter work than to trench, weed and cut cane. And there were appeals from individuals or groups who, having in the past been specialists dependent on chiefly households, were puzzled to know what land to work, and how. There were crazy anomalies. Buli Noco had not only borrowed copra from Lomaiviti, but had actually bought seven or eight bags in Levuka towards the £200 at which his 270 males were assessed. As he said, when told this must stop, he had no caneland, no good coconut trees; and though he had now rented a canefield in a district across the river, it presented access difficulties. This renting of land could lead to bad blood. The Namata people rented from Nausori (Ratu Marika having more profitable use in mind for their own caneland) until Buli Nausori protested that for seven years' use he had received only a thousand yams, while the Namatans had killed twenty-seven Nausori pigs which got into the cane.

12 FCSO 95/3709. 3845.
13 FCSO 92/3930.
14 FCSO 89/2862.
Politics added zest to the pig killing, for Namata was still at odds with Nausori over the ownership of the cane-lands. Politics were involved too when Verata defiantly drank the yaqona they had grown for taxes, instead of passing it to the Receiver-General through Bau. Verata chiefs could never forget the time, three or four generations back, when they had precedence over Bau. And a political object was in view when inland Ra people petitioned to be allowed to seek rest in Colo East, under Carew, from carrying taxes and magiti down to Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi on the coast. What they really wanted was a small separate district under one of their own men, Ratu Jone reported after being sent up to inquire quietly. If they found it hard work carrying a thousand leaves of tax-tobacco each, they were, even so, often prepared to lug down twice as much for sale to coastal storekeepers.

Politics were in it, again, when years of bubbling finally blew the lid off in Seaqaqa. On 11 June 1894 Thurston heard from Ratu Isikeli Kaiatia, Katonivere's successor as Roko Tui Macuata, that Calalevu village had resisted warrants for the arrest of tax defaulters, and had compounded this defiance by reverting to pre-Christian gods. It was advisable that Na Kena Vai should act quickly, the Roko implied, and by evening Thurston was at sea with forty of the A.N.C. He had time to think what his enemies would make of this, the long-promised revolt against slavery in the tax-fields.

Indeed the Seaqaqa did not particularly want to work their new cane-fields down on the coast at Labasa, nor grow the maize nearer home which had been bringing them a poor return for effort. Nor did many other communities either - but they did not rebel. What particularly galled Seaqaqa was that its taxes should go through the capital of Macuata, Naduri. Parts of Seaqaqa felt disinclined to recognise Naduri as legitimate overlord. And what made the Calalevu people eat two officers sent up from Naduri, then set these Calalevu 'rebels' to sounding derisive conches from their old mountain fortress of Caumurimuri as Thurston approached its wooded foot on 14 June, were questions of allegiance and precedence.

15 FCSO 90/3091.
16 FCSO 91/1029, 1523.
17 FCSO: Deportation of Natives, Case 12; Thurston to C.O., 25 June 1894, C083/59.
Look at the condition of Bau itself - 'to me it seems that Bau is sinking, and the cause is clear to every one'. The filth of the unpenned pigs, the bad houses and the general want of comfort were all due to Ratu Epeli's lack of vigour. As to Tailevu itself, he never visited the province except to go to Levuka at regatta time.¹¹

The upshot was that Ratu Epeli lost the Rokoship of Lomaiviti but was allowed to keep Tailevu. Liquor permit or not, he continued to drink at the Club Hotel where he confided to E.J. Turpin that whatever the world might think, Fijians did not love Thurston. Meanwhile Thurston excused to the Colonial Office his continued leniency, explaining that Ratu Epeli was 'after all a very high Chief by birth whose immediate progenitors not only held the property but the very lives of their people in their hands'.¹² The loss, if not of that power in itself, then of many functions and avenues of unfettered action, was what made Cakobau's son turn to an idle life.

Perhaps it was better so. At any rate, in case Ratu Epeli should decide to try his strength again more directly, Thurston interviewed a potential Bauan ally, Buli Soloira. This old man had helped to save Thurston's life as well as Ratu Epeli's twenty-seven years before when, in the retreat of the Bauan upriver thrust against Thomas Baker's murderers, Soloira had refused to join against Bau. Now a celebratory solevu was in planning. During the preparations, Buli Soloira had rather significantly indicated that he was at Ratu Epeli's general disposal. It seemed well to let the old politician know he was being watched.¹³

Among Thurston's own henchmen too the fate of Bau was a matter for concern. He learned this from Ratu Neimani Dreu. Echoing a phrase which Thurston had used, Ratu Neimani wrote that he had been discussing the decline of Cakobau's children. He and Ratu Epeli had decided it was because no ceremony of bulunimate had ever been performed for the Bauans killed on that 1868 campaign. At the unveiling of the Cakobau tombstone, therefore, Ratu Neimani himself would conduct a bulunimate.

¹¹ Correspondence encl. idem.
¹² Turpin, 'Journal'; Thurston to C.O., 16 July 1894, CO83/94.
¹³ FCSO 94/2297.
Ba people well knew how to placate the unquiet spirits of the neglected dead.\textsuperscript{14}

Why had he taken thirty years to think of that? Thurston replied:

I am also surprised to learn that after all you don't believe in God. It is a new thing to be told that a man's life and his 'Kawa' [stock, descendants] depend upon a foolish custom of the 'devil' days, of which the Bauans are ignorant and of which the Roko Tui Ba is the Kena Bete [true priest].

We two know each other Ratu Neimani, therefore do you write quickly and tell me the truth. I can see what you are driving at, and your real thoughts are plain to me. But it would be better if you wrote a straight letter. The Governor is not to be written to as if he were a child.

Another thing, the Kawa of Cakobau is not 'going down'.\textsuperscript{15}

He was an ignorant Fijian of the old school, Ratu Neimani excused himself formally - writing as Roko Tui Ba, not as that Neimani who, in younger days, had felt the presence of the old gods. He was utterly surprised to read Thurston's letter, he continued in his subtly barbed fashion. Only then did he realize that he was wrong to believe in the rites of olden times and in the possibility of benefitting from them today.\textsuperscript{16}

Having seen the dismembered corpses at Caumurimuri, Thurston felt uneasy about any association of pre-Christian with Christian rites. At least the latter were not celebrated with human sacrifices. He would not forbid the buZunimate at Bau, he had already told Ratu Epeli. If Ratu Epeli believed in it, well and good; but, old friend though he was of the man who lay beneath the tombstone, Jone Cositeni could not associate himself with the ceremony.

\textsuperscript{14} Ratu Neimani to Thurston, 16 October 1894, FCSO 94/4033 (encl. in 95/427).

\textsuperscript{15} Thurston to Ratu Neimani, 3 December 1894, FCSO 94/48.

\textsuperscript{16} Ratu Neimani to Thurston, 18 January 1895, FCSO 95/427.
Do not forget your Father whom I well remember. He was a Christian, and observed the lotu which has done so much for Fiji. Do you think that he would like to have any of these old heathen customs celebrated on the next anniversary of his death? I dont think so, but you are his son and therefore do you decide and direct accordingly. 17

When Thurston himself was dead, the Turaga thought it appropriate to perform the mourning ceremony burua for him. Now the bulunimate for Ratu Seru Cakobau went ahead. His friend soon afterwards sought to recharge his own batteries by going on leave.

17 Thurston to Ratu Epeli, 3 December 1894, FCSO 94/48.
Chapter 26

'A stab in the back'

Fiji and the Western Pacific, island realms of European illusions - their wet seasons and restriction of scale weighed upon Thurston again as he prepared to sail for England at the beginning of 1895. He wanted to put his own four eldest children to school there. And he needed a change of climate himself. Continuous mental and physical strain in a mean temperature of 80° Fahrenheit with one hundred inches of rain a year he supposed were bound to tell, even on a constitution he had always prided himself was excellent. Fifty-nine on 31 January 1895, he was energetic as ever. Three-year-old Basset was there to reassure him that the sap still rose. Seaqaqa had exhausted him, though, and the weeks cooped up aboard the Ringdove had done him no good.¹

He left amid applause from the white community. His politeness in the Legislative Council and the success of his financial administration were admired. Velvet lay over his iron glove. He knew how to do a great deal with very little, whether quelling a revolt or establishing a protectorate, ran speeches at a public dinner he was given before sailing.² He could reflect that he had won. 'Even those among the sensible people who don't altogether like my policy towards natives, know that I shall never change it, and so accept the position in a good spirit.'³ There were abstainers from the dinner, though: Turpin, who oscillated between clerking for storekeepers and contract-clearing for sugar companies; Swanston, long since returned from Micronesia a ruined man, who lived off his sons-in-law; Woods, who was surveying; and A.M. Brodziack, shopkeeper, who fretted over the absence

¹Thurston to C.O., 20 November 1895, C083/62; and to Berkeley, 26 February 1896, encl. Berkeley to C.O., 3 April 1897, CO 3/66.
²Fiji Times, 15 August 1894.
³Thurston to Fox Bourne, 20 August 1895, RH MSS BE S18 C153/8.

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of favouritism to himself at the bond-store. They had a London correspondent of still more unbalanced malignity, for Parr sold wine by day, did constituency work for the Tories by night, and lost no opportunity to vilify Thurston with stale inventions. His letters could not be wholly ignored by the Colonial Office, when press and a few M.P.s were still ready to notice them - like Truth, whose proprietor Henry Labouchère attacked the imperial idea while secretly investing in African companies, and J.F. Hogan, Member for Mid-Tipperary. A former sub-editor on the Melbourne Argus, Hogan was always ready to be primed for the supposed purpose of promoting the 'colonial party' through which, uninvited, Hogan professed to represent Australasian opinion to the House.

They would be waiting when Thurston arrived. Seaqaqa had given them unusually good ammunition. Hogan put questions in the House. Parr begged the Colonial Office at least to have Thurston shoot down no more of the poor defenceless creatures. This piece of hysteria Thurston left his Administrator, Berkeley, to answer while he was in the Solomons, adding on his return that Parr was laughingly regarded in Fiji as a monomaniac. His obsessive hunt for evidence was pretty well known locally. His letters somehow went astray sometimes in the Suva Post Office. The place was full of Thurston's spies, Parr said; the whole Colony (meaning the whites) only refrained from attack on the tyrant because they feared he would institute a boycott of their businesses. The truth was probably that they did not enjoy eye to eye confrontations with the half-cajoling, half-threatening little man, but did want whatever help he would give in floating agricultural companies. Parr was still wild on the subject of chiefly oppression. And this, Thurston replied, it was his duty to watch for - 'only second to keeping an unslumbering watch upon the more subtle wrong doing of Europeans in their dealing with the native race'. If anybody thought he was too easy with the Turaga, here was a private

4 FCSO 95/1708 has reports on their overheard conversations.
5 E.g., C083/60, passim, and Fuller's minute on Berkeley to C.O., 19 September 1894, C083/59.
6 Parr's letters, C083/60.
7 Berkeley to C.O., 19 September 1894, C083/59; Thurston to C.O., 7 September and 13 December (confidential), C083/59 and see GBPP 1895 Vol.70 [C.7679].
8 FCSO 94/3239.
letter from Ratu Jone Madraiwiti. Ratu Jone confessed that he had felt as if his bones were broken after being, he now thought justly, censured for misdemeanours in private life.9

It was only surprising the obsessed poor whites had been so quiet since 1888. Now the Fiji Times published a letter from Turpin thanking British men and women in anticipation for giving social, political and religious freedom to Fiji aboriginals bending, yea, breaking, under British oppression.10 This was the 'first beat of the anti-government tocsin' Thurston had been expecting. The sounders' object was still that every Fijian 'shall be left absolutely free, as they term it, and that they also should be equally free to rob and plunder him to the best of their ability'.11

In the wake of the hurricane of January 1895, the Polynesian Gazette was demanding that government send no food to stricken areas. Instead, planters should be given magisterial authority to put destitute Fijians to work for them: 'an exposition of the extraordinary manner in which some half civilized white men are ready to treat half civilized natives in the hour of need....'12 The 'freedom of a British subject' argument was still claptrap to him. Even now Fijians felt and acted as communities, looking to their clans for assistance rather than relying on their efforts as individuals - the emergence of whom was 'a moral and social process', not one that could be brought about by ordinance.13

And if Parr was given a lever because the death rate remained high - a subject which Thurston still disliked seeing aired in the colony - the reason lay not in government policies but in mortality among young children. This led him reluctantly to feel that Fijian mothers, relieved of the punishment that once would have followed neglect, showed less natural feeling for their infants than women of any other people he had read about - though some people who knew Fijians too said this was because they saw no point in raising children in a land no longer theirs. But it was notable that when there had been no epidemics - in 1881, 1882, 1887 and 1888 -

9 Thurston to C.O., 13 December 1894 (confidential), CO83/59, Ratu Jone's 7 December 1894 enclosed.
10 Fiji Times, 24 October 1894.
11 Thurston to C.O., 13 December 1894 (confidential), CO83/59.
12 Polynesian Gazette, 19 January 1895; Thurston to C.O., 4 March 1895, CO83/61.
13 Idem, 13 December 1894 (confidential), CO83/59.
the population had increased. Epidemics apart, he believed the death rate was lower than thirty years before. And he especially wanted it noted that Fijian's high birthrate was 'a remarkable difference from many other similar races that have dwindled down...'.

On 8 March he got his family off for Auckland, trans-shipping there for London via Wellington and Cape Horn. It was a rough passage with a hurricane blowing from the New Hebrides, he told Carew from Wellington, where bleak wooden buildings so far outweighed the beauty of the hill surrounded harbour that he thought it the ugliest city he had ever seen. He had to soothe Carew. Carew's younger colleague from Colo North, Joske, had aroused the almost feudal jealousy which Carew, Commissioner of Colo East, shared with the rokos: he had walked to Suva through Carew's commissionership without first seeking permission. Surely this was no discourtesy, Thurston protested gently, and Joske's taking Buli Soloira with him was no poaching. True, the Buli was Carew's subordinate:

He is a free man never the less and I am not aware that any Buli is debarred from leaving his district for reasonable cause and time when he pleases - He is responsible of course and may be called upon to justify himself - But any commoner may leave his District for sixty days without his Bulis sanction - and surely the Chief is not to be placed in a worse position than the commoner.

From no point of view could he agree with his touchy old friend that 'harm can be deduced from the Buli going down to Suva in a friendly way with a man he had known for years and eating a meal or two at his expense'. Thurston was to sail next day, 21 March, in the S.S. Tongariro.

We shall be full of frozen meat and dairy produce. The trade that has sprung up is wonderful and almost the only thing that is keeping New Zealand on its legs.

14 Idem, 12 April 1892, C083/55, and 19 December 1894, C083/60. 15 Thurston to Carew, 20 March 1895, Carew Papers.
Plate 12 At his grandfather’s family home, Kington House, Gloucestershire: Thurston with young Jack, 1896.
In fourteen days he should sight Cape Horn, a prospect which reminded him of ice on the old Arabia's rigging:

In looking over my journals before leaving home I saw it was 41 years ago last 9th of November since I was last 'off the Horn'. There is probably little change there.16

He was in London by May. He lodged for a few weeks in Kensington, then moved his family to Clifton, near Bristol. He had to apologise for failing to accept an invitation to a reception at the Royal Botanic Gardens. He had been called to the Colonial Office 'when I ought to have been enjoying myself at Kew'.17 He had little enjoyment at all on this visit to England. He had planned to leave by mid-August, travelling back across Canada in order to take advantage of the new Vancouver-Suva-Sydney steamers by which he set much store. But his visit had to be extended until November because of ill-health which struck him soon after landing at Tilbury. It never left him for the twenty-two months of life that remained.

He did make pilgrimages to Thornbury to be photographed at Kington House, home of his grandfather's people, with young Jack. He saw much of the retired Sir Arthur Gordon in his new guise of Baron Stanmore. He talked with Arundel about the projected new Pacific Islands Company, intended to out-trade the Germans and French. But he spent more time in the hands of masseurs trying to stem a disease which, first appearing as bronchitis, defied clear medical diagnosis except on the lines of poliomyelitis. It may have been progressive bulbar palsy. A slowly advancing collapse of the central nervous system, it manifested itself in the throat muscles so that he found it difficult to eat and speak. 'All my muscles are quivering day and night without ceasing.' For too much of his leave, he was shut up in his room trying to believe the English climate to blame for this unexpected, and, he wanted to think, passing affliction.18

16 -- Idem.
17 Thurston to Thiselton-Dyer, 23 August 1895, Kew Letters.
18 -- Idem; to Baillie-Hamilton, 11 November 1895, CO83/61, and to C.O., 16 November 1895, CO83/62; for the Pacific Islands Company, see Arundel to C.O., 26 August 1895, CO225/49, and to Sanderson, 21 August 1895, F058/295; and Fragments of Empire, 264.
He must not be overtroubled with work, his Colonial Office friend Fuller determined. Accordingly he was not shown the attack with which Woods, Swanston, Turpin, William Scott and a couple of storekeepers congratulated themselves they would at last see him destroyed. Their main effort reached London during June 1895 in the form of a statutory declaration by Turpin, as the man among them who had known him longest. Turpin’s hatred had lately been whetted by Thurston’s refusal to provide biographical material for the survey of Fiji settlers which Turpin, a devoted scribe, proposed to give the public. Among other demerits, Turpin supposed that Thurston had fled to Rotuma as a corrupt Sydney customs official. He had filled the colonial service in Fiji with his relations. By his taxation policy he had wilfully sought to wipe out the Fijians. Their condition was miserable in comparison with that of the Maori and Australian Aboriginal. It was straight from the poor-whites’ mill, puerile venom to the Colonial Office – and very revealing of talk behind the counters, in the bars and, occasionally, churches of European Fiji. Turpin’s declaration was followed by one from poor William Scott, butt of Suva for his frenzied attempts to harm the seducer of his wife, the lawyer J.H. Garrick whom Thurston had just given a brief. Old Tom Burness sent off his own rambling complaint, then came apologetically to Government Buildings, disassociating himself from the main group of mortgaged shopkeepers, failed men of affairs, and sad one-time married men.

These were ‘the Irreconcilables’, to Thurston. They were all indulging in fantasy. Woods was heard to say the charge on which they really had him was the ‘true’ one that he had filled the public service with his relations. They amounted to Berry, to dead Harry Thurston’s brother-in-law the Immigration Depot keeper Henry Milne, and to three men married to sisters of brothers-in-law’s wives. There was also a planter in the Colony married to one of his sister

19 Encl. Parr to C.O., 5 June 1895, CO83/62, with Fuller’s minute.
20 Turpin to C.O., 19 April 1895, encl. ibid; and see FCSO 95/1708, which contains a demolition of Turpin and company by Thurston’s subordinates; see also, for further proof of conspiracy, 96/1771; Turpin–Thurston private correspondence is in Brewster Papers, CUMAE.
21 Listed FCSO 95/1708.
Emily Burrow's step-daughters - an alliance which caused Thurston private annoyance; and a publican also connected through in-law's, whom Thurston had lately declined to help 'get people into his net' by building a bridge. It would have been truer to say he found jobs for old colonists. Only William Hennings did he draw the line at, when sad, ruined Hennings wanted to be made President of the Apia Municipality. Perhaps the most pathetic conspirator was Turpin. Persecuted all his life by rats that bit his face in the night, a brother who stole turkeys, and accounts that never would balance, Turpin had once been recommended for a government job by Thurston (whose forgiveness ran quite far) on condition he should never handle public monies.

Though Thurston did not know of these pesudo-specific allegations, Parr was behind them and he encountered Parr's fantasies direct. Parr's problem was to get evidence. Suicide and cannibalism flowed from the tax-system, he said, and so did the death rate; but his personal involvement needed much more. Total destruction alone would satisfy him. He was amazed to find the Thurstons of Thornbury were proud of the rascal, when he approached them with abuse. He wrote around for proof of his conviction that Thurston must be illegitimate. He ambushed retired army officers, unfortunate fellows whose only crime was that they were brothers of, or married to sisters of, R.S. Swanston, only to find their broken-down South Seas relation had told them nothing that could be used against the villainous J.B.T. All this went to feed the morbid resentment Parr had conceived against a man who had so markedly succeeded in the world while he, Parr, was hard-pressed to sell a few cases of gin and champagne.

22 Thurston to Eliza Morton, 26 October 1887, Perrins Papers.
23 Minute 1 March 1895, FCSO 95/703.
24 FCSO 83/2616.
25 Parr's method, and his desperation for want of evidence, is revealed in a letter he wrote to Swanston on 27 February 1895. Sent on by Swanston to Turpin, it was anonymously copied and passed to Thurston: encl. Thurston to C.O., 6 July 1896, C083/63; for Parr's wine-business, see his letters to Captain Henry Olive, Secretary of the Australia Club, Sydney - e.g., his 14 November 1895, ML MSS 1836/141A; and for his unlimited malice, see, e.g., Parr to Knollys, 6 June 1895, C083/62.
Still, Parr got the satisfaction of being answered and published. His help in the constituencies led one M.P. to beg the Colonial Office for a civil reply to his effusions,26 and he could count on Hogan. Hogan had become an expert on Fiji during an afternoon passed at Suva on the outward voyage of a Vancouver-Sydney steamer while Thurston was in the Solomon Islands, and a few hours more on the way back. He kept away from the returned J.B.T., but he was entertained by the hitherto non-existent 'Celtic Club' at a luncheon attended by clerks, shopkeepers and plantation overseers. They always reminded Thurston of those tatterdemalian troops whom Sir John Falstaff discreetly declined to lead through Coventry - 'the cankers of a calm world and a long peace'.27

Thurston's Colonial Office contacts were themselves in several minds about their masterful servant's philosophies, though the Fijian death rate was a worry, and the tax-system seemed increasingly anachronistic. Although Parr had no credit, and Hogan little, they had to be answered. Was Thurston now in England? Hogan demanded. Was he not responsible for a scheme of taxation denounced from the first as slavery, one which a member of his own administration (Beauchlere) had described lately as partly responsible for the death rate? Would not the scheme be changed?28 And so Thurston had to see Herbert and the Secretary of State, Joseph Chamberlain. They had just tried to discredit Parr through a Blue Book shattering his view of Seqaqa. Worried about Fiji nonetheless, they recognised that the free hand Thurston's mystique had given him, so long as he kept within his budget, had made him almost as much their master as they were his. He was unique, they comforted themselves. When the end should come between him and the South Seas, they need not fear that any other man would be able to carry things as he did.29

His evident right to be defended against the libellers distracted official enquiry into the old-fashioned nature of

26 Ritchie to Chamberlain, 30 August 1895, enclosing Parr's 28 August 1895, CO83/62.
27 Berkeley to C.O., 20 May 1895 (confidential), CO83/61; Standard, 5 September 1895, Thurston's letter of 3 September.
28 Hogan's question in House of Commons, 13 May 1895, CO83/62.
29 Minutes in CO83/62 suggest this attitude.
his rule - the more so since Downing Street rebuffs only sent Parr back to the press. If the mandarins were willing to be hoodwinked, the public would not be. He was convinced, or pretended to be, that Thurston's financial success had been achieved by stealing the tax surpluses - and the world should know it.30 One part of Thurston felt it hardly worth acknowledging these manias and misconceptions. Another part of him could not bear to be silent, nor leave press attacks for Stanmore, des Voeux and the Aborigines Protection Society to deal with. He addressed a deputation from the Society, receiving a gratifying statement of continued confidence. He answered Parr and Hogan for himself in The Times and the Standard when they counterattacked.31

Though there was no silencing them, he found newspaper wars had their amusing side. He became a minor lion. A lion with a contemptuously lashing tail, it was understood. An interview he gave H.R. Fox Bourne, the current Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society, appeared in the Sketch. Very few people even now would recognise that Fiji had been ceded not annexed, said Thurston, photographed in mild mood with a son on his knee. The fact was their islands still belonged to the Fijians, apart from the too extensive freeholds they had sold or been robbed of. His duty was primarily to Fijians - and he would resign if he was not allowed to go on doing it. As for Seaqaqa, he told a facetious reporter from Commerce whom he then regaled with trade statistics, he could not pick up London newspapers without reading of incidents here every whit as barbaric as any the Pacific witnessed.32

Fairplay to the owners of the soil was his theme in press interviews. Fiji apart, fairplay meant that the Cook Islands should not be left at the mercy of New Zealand party politics. He said so to his masters, who agreed he made good sense but had to admit that it was all a question of money. New Zealand still provided for the Cook group, and the

30 Parr to C.O., 10 October 1894, C083/60, and to Selborne, 5 August 1895, C083/62; and see his address to the Balloon Society, encl. idem, 24 September, ibid.
31 See his letters to Fox Bourne of August–December 1895, RH BE S18; and Standard, 5 September, The Times, 6 September.
Treasury - to Thurston's horror - hoped Australia would come up with money for the salary of a Resident Deputy Commissioner in the Solomon Islands. Fairplay meant that Samoans should be left to make their own accommodation with the Treaty Powers, not sidetracked by renewed New Zealand demands for sovereignty there. The only way to get rid of the Germans was to buy the D.H.P.G's interests. This New Zealand seemed to know, but she expected Britain to find the money. Perhaps the Pacific Islands Company could do it, Arundel put it to him as they walked together through the City - until the Germans came up with a figure of £750,000.

Unlike Stanmore, Herbert and Bramston, Thurston, however pressed, would not invest in Arundel's new venture. Even had he possessed the money, he would not have added to his private business interests within his own jurisdiction. The most he would do was to say which Fiji plantations were worth buying - and there were not many of them. In 1898 his own plantation was sold to the Company for £2,500. This just covered what his stepdaughter's trustees had invested in it from the portion left her by her own father.

Perhaps above all, fairplay should mean an end to the colonial labour traffic. He told Downing Street and Brisbane this, too. The people of the Solomon Islands and New Hebrides had been 'used up' in a terrible way by Queensland and other places, Fiji among them. Conditions had perhaps improved, but he did not trust Queensland's official mortality figures. His cynicism was supported by a private note from a former Queensland Postmaster General. Certainly there was no substance in the argument, advanced by himself long ago, that Islanders benefited from their plantation experience: 'the ideal life of such natives is their own, not ours'.

He had reports about German treatment of labourers in

34Lady Thurston to Bramston, 15 March 1897, C083/67.
35Thurston to Arundel, 16 August 1896, Arundel Papers.
36Thurston to Baillie-Hamilton, 23 October 1895, C0225/4-.
37Idem, and Thurston to C.O., 12 December 1895 (confidential), ibid.
38Thurston to C.O., 22 October 1895, C0225/49.
Samoa from Acting Consul and Deputy Commissioner at Apia to prove it. With Cusack-Smith on leave, Thurston had sent Charles Woodford there until he could see some way of gratifying Woodford's single-minded desire to rule the Solomon Islands. Thurston had not brought himself to end German recruitment in the new British Protectorates but he had not liked German ideas of estate discipline - the whip and methods of ridicule.\(^{39}\) On further evidence he would gladly see it stopped. If the Germans had to recruit under British regulations, he believed they would give it up of their own accord. But only a Resident would be able to end the hazards inherent in all recruiting:

Shipmasters who have no acquaintance with savage life cannot, in some instances, will not believe that it matters much whether men are landed on one side or the other of some particular point or headland, or whether, in order to reach their actual town men have to cross a small island.\(^{40}\)

His own ideal life would have been the enjoyment of good health, the company of his children, plants and books and perhaps relaxation from all South Seas worries. He still had the children, until he had to leave, but his health continued to frighten his doctors. And Fiji pursued him even more relentlessly than the Western Pacific. He had to comment on Berkeley's able dismissal of another in a long legend of attacks on public service probity by embittered Henry Anson, retrenched in 1888. Thurston had written painfully that they were really aimed at him and, though he cared nothing for Anson, to himself 'a stab in the back would be much the same as to other men'. Fuller commented that the best way to silence Sir John's detractors once for all would be to promote him G.C.M.G.\(^{41}\)

There were London merchants to see. It might be possible to interest them in Fiji over club luncheons during which the agricultural merits of the place would be sung alongside those of the native policy. This could be fitted in between

\(^{39}\) Thurston to F.O., 25 February 1895 (confidential), FO 58/306.

\(^{40}\) Idem, 21 October 1895, ibid.

\(^{41}\) Thurston to C.O., 22 June 1894 (confidential), CO83/59, and 12 August 1895, CO83/62, with Fuller's minute.
massage treatment and impressing reporters with his new quiet manner and romantic past.

Meanwhile his subordinates in Fiji, blundering along his delicate tightrope, were in trouble over the scheme to plant tobacco in Nadroga. One of his pet projects, this, but it had never worked. White investors were supposed to be serving the policy by supplying capital and expertise. Government subsidised a Fijian lease in Nadroga and encouraged Fijians to work in the expectation that they would learn to produce a cigar tobacco which would compete with Sumatra or the Philippines. The current Nadroga lessee had defaulted. His concession had been taken over by Messrs Noyes and Joseph from Sydney. The Nadroga people had agreed to go back to work under Thurston's personal blandishments. Now, disenchanted they were in trouble with their Roko, Ratu Luke Nakulinikoro. With his eye on refunds, Ratu Luke had flogged eight back-sliders. This was more fuel to Parr's fire - and to the Wesleyan missionaries. Chief Justice Berkeley was in trouble with the Saints for refusing costs to the Reverend Mr Chapman in a slander case brought against him by the Marists. Even worse, Berkeley had hinted that while the Reverend Mr Worrall was filling the Australian press with lurid tales of Fijians' starvation after a hurricane, it was odd he should organize great meetings to honour Langham's retirement.42

A regular deluge of correspondence, Thurston wryly thought it. A private note came from James Stewart, Acting Colonial Secretary, who felt Thurston himself would have quietened all the storms with a private note to Langham, in a way Berkeley could not do. 'And you know how infinitely bitter these missionaries can be.' So he did indeed, Thurston reflected. He had nonetheless kept them in hand, like most other Europeans, by a mixture of *suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*. Since they had been so glad to have his help in the Navula emeute though, they really should not abuse his deputy for 'coercive tactics' when Berkeley prevented Langham's visitors quartering themselves on hurricane-impoverished communities. If trouble had continued at Navula:

they would willingly have seen me clap a few rebels in irons, or adopt any other form of coercion, likened me probably to Solomon in

his happier moments, and declared that my rule was the best of all possible rules, etc. etc.

But when they - the Missionaries and Elect people - play stupid pranks with the native people - they resist and resent any gubernatorial action that interferes with their own petty, and, sometimes, selfish plans.43

He could quieten it when he returned, and perhaps win over the Ndroga people to tobacco again too. The question was - when would he get away?

In November 1895 he had to ask for another month's leave. He cabled for the mails awaiting him at Vancouver, thinking things were really going fairly well without him. In mid-December when they arrived he discovered, to the contrary, that a Consolidated Native Labour Ordinance, virtually finalized when he left, had since been amended to remove the clauses relating to home districts and adjacencies. A Fijian would be able to work for a month in any province, and could be paid off before any magistrate:

The result will be wrong doing, vagabondage, and trouble generally.... Thus a man may be induced to go from the Province of Ndroga - or Yasawa to Taviuni or Lau - four or five degrees apart & over sea. It becomes a migration - just as much as if a farm labourer went from our Eastern Coast to Belgium or the Netherlands. When so removed he is, from his circumstances, no longer a free agent. He cannot get back very easily - & so he keeps, or is kept, on working from month to month without any of that protection which has been, by long experience, found absolutely necessary & which the Ordinance, as I left it, provided.44

He was to sail the following Saturday - and went with the Colonial Office's promise that the ordinance would be held over for his comments when he got back to Vale Levu.

43 Minute, 2 August 1895, and Thurston to Fuller, n.d., C083/61.

44 Thurston to Fairfield, 10 December 1895, CO83/61.
If he ever got back. That was his own reservation as he travelled out again in the Tongariro. He sent pictures of her to his youngest son, addressing the letter 'Dear little Mr Basset' and signing it 'Mr Dada'. Basset slept in a locket under his father's pillow, photographs of the other children stood about the cabin. With these hostages to fortune on his mind, he was also remembering the curious fortunes of his sixty years which had brought him to this ship and destination. He had to say something about his past to Stanmore who had hinted that men in the Colonial Office, little as they were inclined to believe Turpin's tales of flight to Rotuma, did wonder about the origins of this slightly amazing Governor. The truth was adventurous enough, they agreed when Stanmore sent them Thurston's answering letter. At any rate there was material in his past for a yarn to entertain his children. He would never get it down on paper, he knew; his fear was that he would not even see them again.

45 Thurston to Basset Thurston, 25 January 1896, Perrins Papers.
46 Thurston to Stanmore, 15 January 1896, C083/65; C.O. Minutes ibid., and on Berkeley to C.O., 9 May 1895, C083/61.
Chapter 27

'I die by inches'

He would have to let the Fiji steamer sail without him, he decided after landing at Sydney in late January 1896.1 He would lie up at the Metropole Hotel until he could breathe more freely - if that ever happened. 'Indeed during the last two days I have felt as if dying', he told Berkeley on 26 February.2 The result was that the Chief Medical Officer came by the return mail steamer, with the Assistant Colonial Secretary and, perhaps most welcome, Ratu Josefa Lalabalavu. Ratu Lala inquired for his foster-father at the Australia Club, which was almost Fiji overseas under Goodenough and Stanmore's one-time protégé, Captain Henry Olive.3 Thurston felt too weak for club life though. He went to lodgings occupied by his widowed sisters, Ann Zöllner and Eliza Morton. He was in what his devoted Lizzie recognized as a critical condition. She put flesh on him while he tried electric baths.4 Something deadly had him by the throat, and he did not believe the damned medicos knew much more about it than he did. 'The leading doctors in England have been unable to do anything for me', he told his youngest sister Emmie who sent him flowers by handsome, short-story-writing step-daughters. He congratulated her on them, while they found him entertaining even in sickness. 'And if the malady cannot be stopped it means that I die by inches while having the vigour of a man of forty' he wrote.5 He felt better for his baths - or perhaps for an end to his shipboard loneliness and the promise that Amy, cabled for, would soon be with him.

1Thurston to C.O., 16 March 1896, C083/65.
2Thurston to Berkeley, 26 February 1896, encl. Berkeley to C.O., 3 April 1897, C083/66.
3FCSO 95/4236, 96/773; Ratu Lala to Olive, n.d. [c.22 March 1896], ML MSS 1836; Langham to Worrall, 23 March 1896, MOM 295.
4Thurston to Eliza Morton, 'Monday', Burrows Papers.
5Thurston to Emily Burrows, n.d., Burrows Papers.
Subject of so much family concern, he was able to approach his situation laughingly when, after luncheon at the Australia Club and another visit from those nice step-nieces, he faced a proposal from Emmie that he give up his doctors in favour of an old lady who seemed to be a witch. 'My first feeling is that we have got back to the days of Willm Hopkins or Cotton Mather.' He sent Jack stamps in case any of Jack's schoolfriends should have the collecting craze, along with instructions about the value of French and Latin. Jack should also say his prayers - sensible boys did. He might also write to his father. 'God bless you my boy. I should like to see you so much.'

If he could get back to Fiji for another eighteen months in harness, he might yet retire with a sufficient pension and go back to the children. Meantime, on 19 May, Basset, a delightful companion, and Amy arrived to keep him alive against pressure of work. Even in Sydney his cough and muscular spasms could not protect him from people wanting action or advice. His rallies and relapses were eagerly noted, as had been his fortunes under attack in London. His suffering at Hogan's hands had only strengthened him, thought Cusack-Smith whom he promised he would soon return, 'though far from my old robust condition'. Sydney newspapers were assuring their readers he had a plan to bring Samoa under British control by buying out the Long-Handled Firm, an echo from approaches made by the Pacific Islands Company:

No truth in it unless we could buy at our price not theirs. Their last proposal was £750,000 which is good for a Company which has not paid a dividend for fifteen years!

Woodford visited him for advice and instructions about the Solomons. Still full of enthusiasm, in spite of continued Colonial Office reluctance to spend imperial money there, Woodford rekindled his own ideas for tropical agriculture in the place. If he had his old health and strength, Thurston reflected privately to Downing Street, he would make the Solomon Islands pay in a very short time. He supported

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6 Idem, 20 March 1896, ibid.
7 Thurston to Jack, 27 April 1896, Perrins Papers.
8 Thurston to Cusack-Smith, 8 May 1896, WPHC: Samoa: Despatches from High Commissioner.
Woodford in a plan to force the Colonial Office's hand. Local salary savings were used to pay him as Resident for a year from the High Commission vote, and Downing Street gave in to the excellence of his reports.9

Less welcome visitors arrived too. Vidal came, en route to Europe, with a string of complaints about government restrictions on the Catholic right to proselytize, particularly a new regulation restraining Fijian children from entering any mission school without their buli's consent. Thurston thought Vidal became excited as usual, and seemed to want to ride roughshod over laws restricting his absolute freedom. He would doubtless fill Downing Street with inaccuracies, just as he had illustrated missionary magazines with photographs attributed to priests, but actually taken by other people.10

There were echoes of Stevenson, too. Thurston had an interview with E.D. Reid, once master of the schooner which brought Stevenson to Apia. Something of a rogue, Reid seemed - as indeed he later proved himself. He was a reminder of those eastern islands where the High Commissioner's writ was supposed to run over browbeaten or rebellious labourers and employers of doubtful solvency. Reid was up to mischief against the interests of his brother-in-law Grieg, licensee of Washington and Fanning Islands. Reid aspired to possess them and, in the end, was to bring the islands into Père Rougier's willing peasant hands via litigation conducted, inevitably, by Humphrey Berkeley. Reid seemed more plausible than honest to Thurston who sent a private note warning his Administrator to give Reid no appearance of a lever against Grieg.11

Langham was a more amusing visitor, involuntarily. He fell on Thurston's neck with complaints about the awful things

9Thurston to Fairfield, 16 October 1896, CO225/50 (the first part of this letter is bound in CO83/65); Fragments of Empire, 262-3.
10Thurston to Berkeley, 4 April 1896, FCSO 96/1352; Thurston to C.O., 19 October 1893, CO83/57; Vidal's complaints are with Vaughan to C.O., 16 March 1896, CO83/65.
11Minute encl. Thurston to Berkeley, 1 May 1896, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, 96/136.
happening in his absence, full of regret that Sir John's health would not let him return to sort out the Nadroga troubles at once. When he sent for Amy, Langham thought, he did not expect to last long. However, he had summoned the strength to write to the *Sydney Morning Herald* putting the floggings in context. He did not take them lightly, he gave Langham to understand, and woe betide any man who flogged in such circumstances again; the sudden death of the flogger, Ratu Luke, Roko Tui Nadroga, would indicate supernatural punishment to the Fijian mind.\(^\text{12}\)

Whatever fault adhered to poor Ratu Luke, the tobacco company was a near disaster. Thurston had to recognise it. His original intention had been that it should employ Fijians not only in the fields but in the curing-sheds too, so that they might be educated in the processing of a potentially lucrative commodity and, in time, might dispense with the company. Now the company had convinced Berkeley, Allardyce and Joske that it should have up to 10,000 acres more in Nadroga and Colo, and should work them, not with Fijians under tuition, but Indians under indenture. Where then was the advantage to Fijians, Thurston demanded, beyond 'the insignificant sum they receive by way of rental'?\(^\text{13}\) He would grant land for twenty-one years, if the Fijians would take half-a-crown an acre. But the company's subsequent demand for control over a much larger area, on the grounds that tobacco needed a five-year rotation, was repugnant to common justice. If they wanted to restrict Fijian food planting in this way, they must pay fifteen or twenty shillings an acre.

He was saying this with the papers before him at Vale Levu on 24 June 1896. A week before, he had returned to a reception which press reports vied with his private descriptions in representing as near ecstatic. No 'despot', or as Parr called him, 'scoundrel', ever had such a welcome, as he took obvious pleasure in assuring gouty old Sir Robert Herbert and others.\(^\text{14}\) The inter-island steamer *Taviuni* came out crowded with well-wishers. H.M.S. *Ringarooma* fired a salute. Ashore there were crowds and arches and addresses (his reply had to be read for him since he had no voice), and then cheering knots of white people all the way up to Government House.

\(^\text{12}\) Langham's letters to Worrall, January-April 1896, MOM 295.
\(^\text{13}\) Minute 24 June 1896, FCSO 96/1434.
\(^\text{14}\) Thurston to Herbert, 14 July 1896, Arundel Papers.
Amy's brother had been making the place habitable. 'Berry said with a sigh that he had put up 82 window curtains during the day', Thurston chuckled, relaxing after receiving more visitors including the Commander-in-Chief. Amy and Nellie shepherded him. Basset had got bigger and 'is most flourishing':

He told his Nurse this morning after coming to say good morning in our room that his mother 'was smashing father'. He meant massaging.16

Presents came in from Fijians. A turtle went on to the Australia Club, with the hope that the sender might be less of a wreck when next he was made welcome there.17 Fiji's welcome sent his spirits up, for all that he told his worried sisters that white enemies could hurt him no more.

Even so, his pulse still beat faster, his lower lip protruding like a terrier's, when he was under attack. He could still be sufficiently concerned about detraction to take pleasure in receiving, anonymously, in a woman's hand, copies of letters between Parr, Swanston, and Turpin which showed how manic and how hard-pressed for fact the group was.18 Not a fortnight after he returned Thurston had to summon all his reserves against Vidal, who had approached the Colonial Office in the expected tone of exaggeration. He had not greatly impressed Cardinal Vaughan who, nonetheless, went to Downing Street to represent him. Rather than complain about educational restrictions, Thurston replied, Vidal should have reported that his priests had lately lost a court case for recovery of a child they had taken. His mission was not one to the heathen, but to confessed Christians, Wesleyans - and he had signally failed. If Thurston really hated Catholicism as the Bishop pretended, he would resign, turn missionary, and in twelve months leave Vidal with very few Fijian church members. Vidal had compared Thurston with the Emperor Julian. Thurston was content: as he read his Gibbon, the head and front of Julian's offence.

15 Thurston to Eliza Morton, 19 June 1896, Perrins Papers.  
16 Thurston to Arundel, 16 August 1896, Arundel Papers.  
17 Thurston to Olive, 2 July 1896, ML MSS 1836/143A.  
18 Thurston to C.O., 6 July 1896, CO83/63.
in Christians' eyes was that Julian would not persecute them. Welcomers kept coming, Fijians especially. 'The people have not yet done coming in "to look at my face". One man yesterday made a speech that would have done honour to a University man. A message of condolence came from Rotumans, who did not forget he had been cast away on their charity in 1865. A private letter from Apia showed that Samoans sometimes required his services in intimate matters. Doubtless giggling prettily, the taupo or ceremonial virgin of Matafogatale village wanted Thurston to tell 'the son of the married wife of the late King of Fiji' that she would be glad to marry him. She did not know his name and had never met him, but trusted Thurston not to propose to the wrong man.

He was not likely to offer the girl to Ratu Epeli. The Roko Tui Tailevu remained incorrigible. He still declined to join the Catholic Church, the final breach with the colonial establishment, leaving that to Ratu Jone Colata, but his lack of assiduity in government business was now so marked that Thurston almost felt inclined to follow Allardyce's advice and bring Ratu Epeli down at last. Yet he held back, even restoring Epeli's liquor permit so that he would not be shamed at the marriage of Ro Tui Sawau. And when Ratu Jone Colata came out of gaol, where he had been put for leading the Bauans against a planter's labourers, he was brought up to Vale Levu to hear a final appeal for constructive leadership.

Its absence was heart-breaking. Ratu Tevita Rasuraki, Roko Tui Bau, defended a backsliding buli with the assurance that he was a good man vakaviti, one who followed the paths of the land. After nearly a generation of British rule he should know a bit more than that, Thurston retorted.

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19 Idem, 15 August 1896, CO83/64; and FCSO 96/1906.
20 Thurston to Emily Burrows, 18 July 1896, Burrows Papers.
21 Marafu to H.E. Leefe, 1 April 1896, FCSO 96/4458.
22 Cusack-Smith to Thurston, 25 January 1896, WPHC Inward Correspondence, General, unnumbered, filed after 96/38.
23 Minute 7 November 1896, FCSO 96/3765.
24 Minute 21 September 1896, FCSO 96/3049.
25 Minute 16 November 1896, FCSO 96/2924.
And now Ratu Peni Tanoa was ruined finally. Reinstated in a minor office after three and a half years' exile, he was found to have embezzled rent monies and had to be left to the law. He nonetheless earned the Governor's respect for his bold-faced admission of guilt. Only over his beautiful wife, Adi Cakobau, could Thurston still throw a protective arm. So long as she remained at Navuso near her husband's predatory brothers, Thurston worried about her and her string of comely Tongan cousins from her mother's side. He invited her to live in his grounds:

Adi Cakobau arrived here yesterday (I have not seen her yet) with a troop of Tongan Maramas who will go back to Tonga next week per 'Taviuni'. They will be well out of Navuso.

Then I shall reduce her Establishment to her mother two women, and one man as 'wood and water boy' while food should come down from Naitasiri. As for solace, it could be expected in a fatherly way from Vale Levu. If anybody interposed, Thurston became hurt. Appealed to by Ratu Marika Toroca in Adi Cakobau's name on her gaoled husband's behalf, Thurston protested that really she could come direct to him. He was mollified by her reassurance that she had not asked Ratu Marika to speak for her. Truly she may have hesitated to come up to his house, for he was virtually on his death-bed.

He could not go to install Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi as Roko Tui Ra but had to send Allardyce - a pity, for Ratu Jone was one highly efficient man deserving the Governor's personal support. His detailed instructions must suffice. At Ratu Jone's installation Buli Bure, lately rebellious about building houses for the Roko, must be told that this was 'wrong & unchieflike & must not occur again'; and Allardyce should inquire quietly whether under the custom of the Ra coast it was proper for this Buli to send turtles to another without reference to Ratu Jone, who had complained at his doing so.

26 FCSO 96/2080; Thurston to C.O., 12 November 1896, CO83/65.
27 Thurston to Carew, 28 August 1896, Carew Papers.
28 Minutes 30 October and 13 November 1896, FCSO 96/3674.
Thurston would generally support Ratu Jone and defend him against his captious neighbour Carew whose subordinate, Buli Nailega, was the other alleged culprit in the incident. For his own part Thurston doubted whether 'custom' was monolithic in Ra: 'I shd not be surprised to learn that on their own coasts they fish as they please.'

He had to conserve his energy now; a newspaper from a nephew in Western Australia only reminded him sadly how eagerly he would have scanned it once. Sometimes he did feel so much improvement that he thought his voice would come back, sometimes his nights were so wracked with coughing that he could barely eat or drink next day. His private time was given over to electrical treatment, throat-painting and inhaling. It was miserable enough, for all the cheerful comments made to him. By management he could do a fair day's work, he felt, 'but I never am quite clear as to what is before me'. This was belied by his reaction to the massacre on Guadalcanal of an exploring party from an Austrian warship, led by the naturalist Baron von Norbeck:

Many people judging from the Press think there ought to be a 'battue' of natives. I want to know what the Baron was doing there?

In my opinion a man who, with a small and stupid escort, invades the mountains of a savage people shd expect to get killed.

When the native struck him with an axe one of the party fired and the bullet went through the body of the native and through the Barons body also. He really died from the gunshot.

And he was pretty clear on what was before him in Fiji. Matailobau district council was seeking the return of an exile, one of the 'young Fiji' stalwarts whose assertions of

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29 FCSO 96/3408.
30 Thurston to Emily Burrows, 30 September 1896, Burrows Papers.
31 Thurston to Eliza Morton, 24 September 1896, Perrins Papers.
32 Thurston to Emily Burrows, 30 September 1896, Burrows Papers.
superiority and demands for power and office irritated Carew and another old establishment figure, Native Stipendiary Magistrate Ro Jone Kuraduadua. As always in the past, it seemed best to Thurston to interview senior men from Matailobau, though his words had actually to be spoken by Allardyce.33

The insanitary condition of Bau was complained of by its Native Stipendiary Magistrate. Allardyce wished to use Bau as a starting point in the sanitary improvement campaign which was supposed to help stem the death rate. Thurston's decided opinion was that no such proposed European sanitary inspector could have any effect while Ratu Epeli remained Roko Tui Tailevu.34 Still, if Ratu Epeli were to be removed from office at last, it was going to be on grounds other than his lack of interest in Bau's water supply. Even in September while Thurston was sending London what he considered to be the overblown report of a commission into the population decrease, he doubted whether sanitary improvement could be brought about by legislation. There were regulations enough already. With a keen sense of village realities, he would not accept that Fijian women were as overworked as some observers believed. Nor did he think that a prize for mothers with large families would heap anything but the ridicule on their sisters upon the winners. Yet lack of care for children was the cause of mortality; he did not doubt this, and 'the disturbance of many of the wholesome customs of their former life caused...by the incoming of the white man, with the latter's never ending demand for labour...'. He felt that the report was an unhelpful compendium of speculation, error, and information which government already possessed but was not clear how, or was not able, to put to use; it showed what happened when subordinates with a name to make, like the members of the commission, could go their own sweet way.35

This was a sore point. His labour legislation had been altered by his deputy whom, should he live, Thurston would never willingly leave in charge again, so much was the newly knighted Berkeley devoted to the trappings as opposed to the

33 Minutes 23 July and 5 August 1896, FCSO 96/2355.
34 FCSO 96/3765.
35 Thurston to C.O., 12 September and 14 October 1896, CO83/64; on women overworked, see Bua Provincial Council Book, February 1892.
hard grind of office. Berkeley had changed the labour legislation upon the recommendation of Allardyce, a hard, efficient man. Liking to use tough-minded subordinates, Thurston had always found him congenial. Thurston was so much more widely experienced that he could be relaxed in his dealings with subordinates but his experience, for a moment, in his absence, seemed to have been forgotten.

The explanation offered by the gratified Fiji Times for this revised Ordinance, the first ever made with employers' interests in view, was that he was away; and nothing convinced him otherwise. Not six Fijians knew what a 'Home District' or an 'Adjacency' was, Allardyce protested; the idea that a Yasawa man might be stranded after being taken for a month 180 miles against the trades to Taveuni, or 240 to Lakeba, was supposititious. An employer would be out of pocket by carrying him so far. But were it to happen, the labourer could still recover wages before a magistrate. This was an extreme case, Thurston agreed; and it was true that men taken outside their provinces did not necessarily become vagabonds; but this had happened before the old legislation was introduced, and he could see no cause to suppose it would not happen now. He wanted the Ordinance disallowed. The fact that he mislaid this exchange until January 1897 indicates his failing control, his new dependence on subordinates. He was as masterfully cogent as ever on other subjects where he had their full support - as in the Treasury's inability to understand its own accounts, and in counter-blasts against its renewed attempts to seize his small surpluses to pay off the Colony's debt more quickly.

As Thurston found it still harder to breathe, the word passed. Woodford and Cusack-Smith looked for good news. Swanston contentedly reflected that his old enemy was now finished physically as well as morally. Downing Street was almost relieved. With Sir John Thurston pretty well a dead man, his superiors recognised the signal for a sea-change in Fiji, a new era when labour laws would be eased, the 'communal system's' end be hastened and the growth of the 'individual' encouraged. Some of his subordinates looked to the replacement

36 Thurston to Fairfield, 16 October 1896, C083/65.
37 Fiji Times, 31 July 1896; Thurston to C.O., 14 January 1897, C083/66.
38 Encls ibid.; FCSO 96/3172.
39 Thurston to C.O., 12 October 1896, C083/64, and 16 December 1896, C083/65.
of the taxation scheme with a cash levy. Sir Henry and Mr Humphrey Berkeley looked for plums to pull out of the colonial pudding when the still frightening little man should be removed forever.

He kicked until the last. On 2 September 1896 he answered American appeals against decisions of the Lands Claims Commission. No one could have drafted the despatch for him. As a result of the Foreign Office's weakness over the German claims, the United States had sent a commissioner to Fiji to hear disgruntled heirs of American seamen whose titles had not stood the tests everyone else's had been put through. The commissioner's report was replete with quotations from Blackstone (who seemed to Thurston not much apposite to the South Seas, unless in his statement of the conditions to be satisfied before a deed could properly be registered); from Swanston, who would say anything to discomfort the government which had so often dismissed him and who was anyway notorious for changing his mind, while his Fijian social definitions were exceptionable; and from Mr J.B. Thurston's memorandum on land tenure, written in 1874. It gave Mr U.S. Commissioner Schidmore authoritative support for his own suggestion, essential to the success of his clients, that the main prerequisite for a deed's validity at custom was a ruling chief's signature. Not so, said Sir John. Mr Thurston had been in error. He had lived at Bureta where the people were in a particularly abject relationship with the Bau chiefs, and so had underestimated the need for an element of consent from the itaukei to any transfer of rights. Even so, he had

still expressed the opinion clearly that no Chief should sell land without the consent of the occupants, nor the occupants sell without the consent of their Chief. I recognized that since the advent of Europeans, old ideas and usages had undergone important changes - but they had not chrystallized - they had not endured long enough to acquire the sanction of a new custom. The people would endure, but if pressed too far by their Chief they would murder him, or transfer themselves to some more powerful Chief.40

40 Thurston to C.O., 2 September 1896, CO83/64.
Fiji was not a white man's colony, when all was said. The then Sir Arthur Gordon had made that remark years before, and Sir John Thurston would repeat it now. And yet, said Thurston, the comment was simply acknowledgement of the fact that Fiji, a tropical archipelago with an astonishingly limited proportion of cultivable land, was no place for a colony of white settlement. Under a Governor who sought to say otherwise within the next ten years, the sequel went to show how powerful the word of Lord Stanmore still was at the Colonial Office, backed as it could always be by his upraised voice in the House of Lords. Sir Everard im Thurn was to be overruled in the new century's first decade when he tried to throw unoccupied Fijian land open to European purchasers on the assumption that Fijians were a dying people.

The question was how long J.B.T. himself would be able to say anything. Nothing seemed certain to him except that he had a devoted wife; her nursing kept him going. He received a note from Lizzie, dated 20 October - his son Jack's birthday, he reminded her on 1 December when at last he could drag himself to reply. He admitted to being in a bad way. 'I get up tired and at 5 p.m. am worn out and fit to fall on the floor.' He needed rest, but could not escape; unless he could serve a little longer his pension would not educate five children. He had heard from the four in Bristol - Baba and Dolly, Jack and Ted were getting on famously. 'I wonder if I shall ever see them again.'

He died by inches, as he had foreseen. He struggled on into the new year of 1897, fed with a stomach tube but still active in brain and hand. Even so, before December 1896 was out he had requested twelve months' leave - 'by which time I should be cured or dead'. Still his doctors held out hope. And with the prospect of escape from work, Thurston too may have hoped. It was hard to give up when the moment came, even so. Not until he left Suva wharf would he fully yield control. Not even when the light on Cape Washington, Kadavu, was lost in the sea would he let go emotionally of Fiji. If he died, then he wanted to be brought back for burial.

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41 Ibid.
42 Thurston to Eliza Morton, 24 September 1896, Perrins Papers.
43 Thurston to C.O., 7 January 1896, C083/66, describes his condition.
44 Berkeley to C.O., 5 April 1897, C083/65, on Lady Thurston's authority.
Meantime, he disposed of his household. Peni Raiwalui, often seen with Bunny in photographs, had served him several terms; his discharge should be made out as from 25 January 1897.45 Thurston wrote this uneasily but not unrecognizably. Eleven days later, his signature was that of personality destroyed when he signed a typewritten farewell to Executive Council. It announced his departure on 30 January, the following day:

I trust that at no distant date I may be able to again preside over your Board; but in the meantime I desire to express my thanks for the cordial assistance and sympathy which I have met with at your hands, both in the past, and during my present indisposition.46

He was in Sydney within a week, holed up briefly at the Metropole and forbidden to see friends. He was very, very sick Amy told Captain Olive, but the doctors did not despair.47

If his brain was active as they put him aboard the steamer Burembeet to take him to her doctor stepson in Melbourne, then it thought of Jack, who had promised vain-gloriously to write in Latin; of Bunny, who sat outside the cabin door while his father gave their mother a petition to the Secretary of State seeking a pension for his dependants in return for a splendid constitution sacrificed to the strains of a very unusual colony which, he felt, he more than any other man had created.48 And if consciousness was almost gone with speech, as Amy believed it was when he handed her this petition, unsigned, off Melbourne on the night of 6 February 1897,49 any spark his mind retained probably centred on the meagre £1,350 which made up his whole estate.

Perhaps as he moved with this lurching steamer, distant consciousness of the sea took him back to his youth. He had known the more sympathetic movement of ships under sail, of Indiamen on the coast of Coromandel, the Arabia beating up

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45 Minute 18 January 1897, FCSO 97/264.
46 FCSO 97/447, encl. in 816.
47 Lady Thurston to Olive, n.d., ML MSS 1836/145C.
49 Lady Thurston to Mercer, 20 February 1897, CO83/67.
for Bahia, the *James* negotiating passages in the Gilbert Islands. The movement of the sea beneath him in that creaking cabin with his uncomprehending son at the door, and his all too aware wife beside him, may have recalled the *Strathnaver* in the New Hebrides when long dead Marie could be imagined as equally concerned that he should not die; or the tediously slow motions of the schooner he took up to Vanua Balavu over the oily flat sea of January 1873, seeking Tui Cakau's and Ma'afu's agreement to cede Fiji under safeguards.

He died as the *Burembeet* approached Port Melbourne in the early hours of 7 February 1897. Four days later he had a military funeral in Melbourne. He went on a gun-carriage from Government House to the Melbourne General Cemetery and a brick-lined grave under the Moreton Bay Figs planted by his botanical correspondent Sir Ferdinand von Mueller. It was bricked because he was supposed to be taken back to Fiji. Spectators were reported in their thousands along the route. Colonial dignatories stood around the grave under umbrellas against the drizzle he had detested after so many years under exciting tropical downpours. Richard Seddon, Premier of New Zealand, was incongruously conspicuous as a pall-bearer. J.C. Smith represented Amy. Old enemies re-lived their youth too. T.H. Prichard was there, uniformed as a Lieutenant in King Cakobau's army. In articles for Australian newspapers, Tom Prichard had lately been representing Thurston as a character to catch the imagination; and he went off from the grave to write a very fair obituary of him as 'The Viceroy of the Pacific' in *Review of Reviews* for 20 February.

Adventure and romance were the themes of obituaries. His was such a life as novelists dreamed up, the editorials reflected. What Louis Becke wrote about, Thurston had lived. So had islands trader Becke; he added his own praise in the *Chronicle* for a man whose understanding of the South Seas he thought unique. For the adventurous there were always adventurers, the *Sydney Morning Herald* summed it up; so long as such a career was possible, the age of romance was not past. In *The Times*, Hogan hastened to say he was fully aware the dead man's 'mastery over the problems of the South Seas...was

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Thurston press-cutting book, for samples of obituaries. Prichard's is in *Review of Reviews*, Australasian Edition, 20 February 1897; and see especially *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 February 1897; *Argus*, 12 February 1897, describes the funeral.
simply incontestable'. 51

Meanwhile Parr tried to catch the new Governor, Sir George O'Brien from British Guiana, who was soon horrified to recognize Fiji as a virtually undeveloped colony. Its lands were lying idle, the Fijian people were disinclined to labour because they knew this land was theirs, and they were difficult to approach by any European who had no personal ties with them. 52

Strong personal rule died with Thurston. While Europeans were making their peace with a maligned man whom at his death it was quite gratifying to admire, Fijians were half-heartedly promised his body should be brought home. He was a foreigner, when all was said. Even so, Ratu Neimani Dreu, Ratu Tevita Rasuraki and of course Ratu Josefa Lalabalavu wanted him back. This embarrassed their new white rulers, most of whom wanted J.B.T. forgotten. Ratu Lala reminded his foster-father's former subordinates how much he was indebted to the dead man for care all his life. He wanted to bring magiti to Suva for a burua. 53 Told to wait, and coldly informed that Fijians' contributions would be invited in money to bring the body home, Ratu Lala held his own burua at Somosomo.

For the body's arrival Ratu Lala waited in vain. Its return at government expense was supported by Berkeley. It was vetoed by the Colonial Office until Berkeley should have overcome his reluctance to recommend to the Legislative Council special provision for Lady Thurston and her children. 54 At her frantic instance their financial plight had been put to the Colonial Office by Arundel and others. It was absurd for Berkeley to argue that pensions would form a precedent - Thurston was unique, Downing Street commented. It would be 'a ghastly mockery' to organize a 'public funeral and a grand monument over the dead body of a man whose wife and 6 children are left with a pittance of £50 or £60 a year...'. 55 A special pension of £50 a year for each of Thurston's own five

51 The Times, 11 February 1897.
52 Parr to Olive, 11 March 1897, ML MSS 1836/146A; O'Brien to C.O., 8 December 1897 (secret), C0537/115.
53 Ratu Lala to Governor, 31 March 1897, FCSO 97/1195.
54 Minutes on Berkeley to C.O., 5 April 1897, C083/65.
55 Ibid.
children was voted. The whites in the Legislative Council having been so generous, return of the body was left to Fijian subscription.\textsuperscript{56}

Subscriptions were invited, but not in a manner likely to encourage Fijians' participation.\textsuperscript{57} At the 1903 meeting of the Bosevakaturaga, the chiefs resolved again to beg the administration to bring him home; and again nothing effective was done. Despite a rearguard action by Allardyce, much of what Thurston stood for was soon to be swept away - the Fijian District Courts, European Stipendiary Magistrates who kept out of Fijian affairs, the Native Taxation System, the jealously guarded integrity of village life. His body would have been an inconvenience in Fijian soil, though not an irrelevance. It was kept away, unmarked by any headstone until the colonial government paid for what Eliza Morton thought a cold one in black marble.

Fiji became independent as a Dominion ninety-six years after Thurston negotiated its reluctant Cession to the British Crown. An idiosyncratic dependency until the last, it took as its national day 10 October - Cession Day. At independence on 10 October 1970 political power still lay in Fijian hands, though there were more European businessmen in the background than Thurston would have wished to see. The Fiji hero today is a son of his protégé Ratu Jone Madraiwiwi - Ratu Sir Josefa Lalabalavu V. Sukuna. In the 1940s, as Secretary for Fijian Affairs, Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna sought to reinvigorate the links between Fijian societies and government after forty years of decay following the death of Na Kena Vai. The model he looked to was the system prevailing on 7 February 1897. That, Ratu Sukuna implied in his speech to Legislative Council reintroducing the Fijian Administration, was the end of an era for Fijians. He did not despair, though, of reawakening it.

\textsuperscript{56} Minutes on Berkeley to C.O., 31 March 1897, FCSO 97/1195.
\textsuperscript{57} O'Brien to C.O., 28 July 1897, CO83/66.
Personal biographical records

To Thurston Papers and Perrins Papers listed in I, the Very Bayonet may now be added Burrows Papers—letters written by Thurston during the last two decades of his life to his sister Emily, Mrs Henry Burrows. The National Archives of Fiji hold his journal of the inauguration of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Protectorates.

His very extensive other private correspondence is to be found in:

George Brown Papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney
Papers of W.S. Carew, Hocken Library, Dunedin
George Hardy Bates Samoan Papers, University of New Delaware
Aborigines Protection Society Archives, Rhodes House, Oxford
Wilfred Powel Papers, Royal Commonwealth Institute
Library of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Selborne Papers, Lambeth Palace Library
Salisbury Papers, Christ Church, Oxford
Archive of the British Consul to Samoa, National Archives, Wellington
Papers of F.J. Moss, Auckland Museum and Institute and Auckland
University Libraries
Stanmore Papers, British Museum
Brewster Papers, Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology

National Archives of Fiji

Records of the Governor, Colonial Secretary’s Office, Provincial Office, Supreme Court; and much other material, including Turpin’s ‘Journal and Narratives’ and the Papers of William Hennings.

Western Pacific Archives

Until closed in 1979—when the contents were dispersed to the Pacific territorie and to London—these held the archive of the Western Pacific High Commission; lists may be found in my Fragments of Empire.

Public Record Office, London

CO 83 Original Correspondence, Fiji
CO 225 Original Correspondence, Western Pacific High Commission
CO 537/115 Supplementary Correspondence, Fiji and Western Pacific
CO 209 Original Correspondence, New Zealand
CO 234 Original Correspondence, Queensland
PRO 30/29 Granville Papers

Fiji Museum

Journals and Papers of R.S. Swanston
Miscellaneous Documents

Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology

Journal of Baron von Hügel
Ethnological Notes of E.O’B. Heffernan
Church of St Mary of the Arches, London
Papers of Cardinal Manning

Archdiocese of Suva Archives, Suva
Papers relating to the Roman Catholic Mission

Archivio Padri Maristi, Rome
Correspondance de Mgr Vidal avec l'Adm. Gén.

Business Archives, Research School of Social Sciences, ANU
C.S.R. Co. Archives

Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, ANU
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