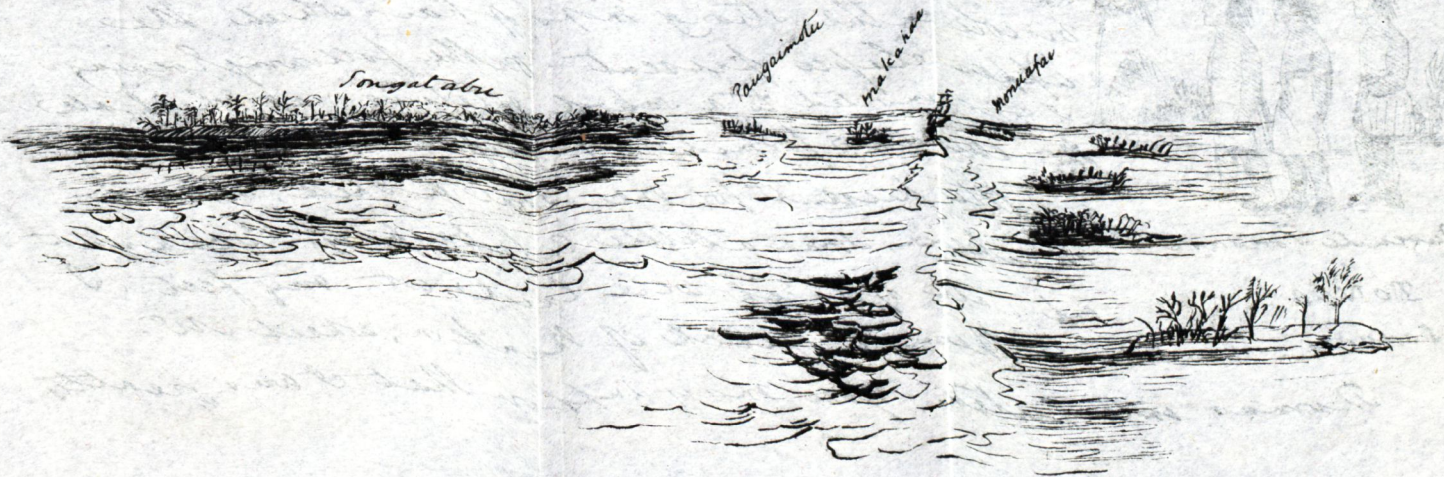


Tonga Tabu. Epiphany. 1848.  
H. M. Ship Dido at anchor.



My dearest Father,

If you have not forgotten your reading of Cook's voyages, you will have a clear idea of my present position. at the request of the Governor of New Zealand, seconded by my own strong inclination, I took my passage in H. M. Ship Dido Captain Maxwell, on a cruise to some of the Islands in the South Sea. lest you should think that I have gone out of the course of my own duty, I must tell you that the Archbishop of Canterbury in his valedictory letter to me, commended to my notice the project of "Christianity through the Coasts and Islands of the Pacific"; a charge, which the troubled state of New Zealand has hitherto prevented me from attempting to fulfil. Peace being happily restored, and a favourable opportunity being offered, I embarked on board this ship on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December, Captain Maxwell, son of Sir Murray M. most kindly gave me a place in his Cabin, where I enjoy a degree of comfort and luxury which I have not known in the Flying Fish & Madeline. After a slight N. E. gale which we met after leaving New Zealand, we fell in with the trade wind from the S. E. and on the tenth day came in sight of Eua (Eoa) within 8 miles of Tonga Tabu. on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January, with a bright & sparkling trade wind we sailed between the Coral reefs of Tonga Tabu, admiring the white line of foam dividing the deep blue water of the ocean from the sea green lagoon within: with a labyrinth of small islands on our right hand, & the coast of Tonga on the left.





a native pilot conducted us into the harbour, with whom I practised the Tonga dialect, having studied it during the voyage but I found that it is so different from the New Zealand dialect though radically the same that it will take me a long time than we are likely to stay, before I shall be able to speak it fluently. When the ship was anchored, we were surrounded by a fleet of small canoes, with the well known "Coquise" supplies, of Bananas, Cocoa nuts, Breadfruit & Yams. On landing the next morning, we were met on the beach by Mr. Thomas, the senior member of the Wesleyan Mission, who has spent twenty years in the Friendly Islands. He guided us through shady lanes of Cocoa nut, Plantain & Breadfruit, with neat fences wattled with reeds, to his own house a native building formed of the stems of the Cocoa nut, tied together with string made from the husk. In the village around us the busy sound of wooden mallets beating out native cloth gave a life & spirit to the village; though neither houses nor people could be seen. Through this delightful shade the trade wind caused a most refreshing coolness. At noon we went to the school, where 220 children assembled, and went through their exercises under the direction of Mr. Amos, who has lately arrived to organize a school system in the Wesleyan Mission. They were



Juvenile Tonsure  
TONGA.  
SCHOOL.

all dressed in the native fashion, with short kilt of native cloth, or leaves, and the bust bare, and anointed with Coconut oil. 'Evei 'e'oa'vto kai 'i'he'ava'v 'e'ia' 'e'ia' is the preparation for all ceremonies throughout the Pacific: The lower claps of young children are the most amusing little objects, with beehive crowns; the effect of which custom is visible in the strong mops of hair which the upper claps present. On the following evening I was invited to a school meeting, at which all the children formed a procession, each bearing a little present for me, some a shell, some a chicken, some a little calabash of Cocoa nut oil, all of which were laid at my feet. I made them a speech of thanks, which Mr.

Thomas interpreted. You may suppose that I was greatly



interested and gratified by the sight

During our stay I walked over the greatest part of the Island visiting the other Mission stations at Hehifo and Pua. In the former I had another school meeting, with 125 children, all greeting with a cheerful countenance, resplendent with oil, but not therefore redolent, for the pure coconut oil is limpid & fragrant. The native chapel at Hehifo is a noble building, without rails, but bound together with the coconut rope, beautifully arranged in variegated patterns. In the neighbourhood is the Westminster or Stone of Tonga, the place of Inauguration of the Chief King of the Islands - under the shade of a spreading trawa (or wild Fig tree)



Mr. Turner's chapel now stands on the site of the fort of Nukualofa described in Mariner's Tonga Islands; and by the side of it - lies the body of Captain Cook after his ship *Favourite* who was killed in an assault upon the heathen fortress of Beu in the middle of the Island. We visited the place of his death, which is a large Koto or fort surrounded by a moat; with short gates formed of stems of trees. Hollow trees are laid in the embankment for look holes to fire through, and a stockade wall with reeds is placed at the top. The inside of the fort is full of Coconuts & Bananas. The only good springs of water are in the neighbourhood -





Captain Cook's death was the result of an attempt to carry out an armed mediation between two contending parties in Tonga, in which he proceeded with very little prudence or knowledge of native character; and unhappily lost his life when attacking the gate of which I have given you an idea on the other page -

In visiting the Wesleyan Station at the Maa I came to a gigantic Oava tree at the head of the lagoon which runs deep into the middle of Tongatapu thus. The Oava resembles the Banyan in its mode of growth - the young tree as it grows striking fibres down into the ground, which by degrees become consolidated into



one enormous trunk. My native friend & I measured the girth of the tree & found it 25 feet round.



The roots on one side run down into the shallow water of the lagoon - over which enormous Lembo stretch out; no longer needing the support of the clustered roots, but seemingly as strong and independent as the oak itself.

My respect for Mr Thomas the Wesleyan Missionary & devoted man; and hope that the young converts to who have lately joined him will follow in his steps -

Nothing can be conceived more delicious than the walks at Tongatapu. They are the garden of the Hesperides without the Dragon, for since heathenism has been almost driven out, every part of the Island may be freely visited, over head are clusters of the most delicious tropical fruits; and you



hair scarcely even to ask for them, for they are freely offered to the traveller, when he enters into the house. The paths are carefully kept, of good width, without root or stone to catch the feet, and with an overhanging shade of various trees to keep off the heat of the sun. The ground being perfectly level you may suppose that my New Zealand steps sped freely over such a different surface from that <sup>of</sup> my own Islands. Still I should not wish to change for there is an enervating and luxurious softness about the climate & country which might Capsize many weak minds, and take out from their ministry its nerve & spirit - I am delighted with these Islands & their people, yet prepared to return contentedly to my own.

The Friendly Islanders are certainly in many respects a more pleasing people than the New Zealanders; and the prospect is better for their increasing in numbers but there seems to be one prevailing complaint throughout the South Seas that the Polynesian race cannot be induced to work: and without that how can they become a civilized people. The New Zealanders on the contrary are ready & willing to work; and under good masters evidently improve by it.

Our next stage, God willing, is Pivaoo, one of the Rapaui Islands, of which I hope to send you some account, in the form of a second chapter of the Illustrated Polynesian Museum. Believe me that in the midst of these distant Islands, "my heart untravelled still returns to home". Commending you & my dear Brothers & Sisters, to the same Holy Spirit who I trust guides me through the uttermost parts of the sea - I remain, my dear Father

Your dutiful & very affectionate Son,  
G. A. Mealand.

My kindest love to Aunt Eliza.



G. S. Melville

Recd at Richmond  
July 1 - 1840

England

~~of the~~

William Selwyn, Esq<sup>r</sup>

Richmond

Cherry -