

POLYNESIAN WOOING;

The Tulafale, or heads of families, who, as such, are the chiefs' councillors, met in solemn conclave, and selected a bride of suitable rank; and as the dowry which accompanied the bride was always distributed amongst them, these sages took care to select one whose tribe was able to give a large amount of property. The selection made, food was formally taken to the tribe, and the chief's daughter as formally demanded. If the food were accepted, it was an intimation that the demand was favourably entertained. If left just where the suitors deposited it, in front of the fala tele, it was an intimation that the demand was rejected. The ultimate acceptance or rejection of the suit was with the Tulafale of the tribe to which the girl belonged, and their decision was supposed to be final. But if, notwithstanding their rejection, the young lady had a *penchant* for the young chief who thus wooed her, she eloped with him some fine night, and the first the family and tribe knew of her flight was the announcement of the fact by the friends of the young man as they walked through the village, shouting his name, coupled with hers, and in extempore songs proclaiming the praises and extolling the virtues of the hero of the adventure. Further objection was then useless, and, though great excitement always followed an elopement, it soon cooled down, and in the course of three or four months all parties were duly reconciled by the exchange of dowries. If the Tulafale consented and the girl objected, she was nevertheless compelled to yield. But no sooner was the exchange of property consummated than she ran away from her husband; and then, according to circumstances, she was either driven back by her father or brothers, or retained by them until more property was presented by her husband. When, on presentation of the food, the suit was at once accepted, the contract was held there and then completed, and the tribes retired, each to prepare for the dowries, for both bridegroom and bride were accompanied by a dowry. That presented by the bridegroom was called *oloa*, and consisted of prepared food of all kinds, together with live pigs, poultry, canoes, clubs, and spears and laterally of muskets, powder, hatchets, calicoes, and indeed of all kinds of white man's property. The dowry accompanying the bride was called *toga*; (*tonga*;) because consisting of fine mats, and siapo, or native cloth. The Tulafale of each tribe provided these dowries, which, after being exchanged at the celebration of the nuptials, were again distributed amongst them by the chiefs, the fathers of the bridegroom and bride, and great care was required to give to each Tulafale as near an equivalent as possible to the contribution he had made, to prevent nepotism on the part of the chief, and jealously amongst his followers. While the preparations were in progress, the bridegroom and his tribe continued occasionally to take food to the bride and her tribe, and some of the personal followers of the chief remained with the lady as her attendants, and to guard against the proposals of rivals. In the course of three or four months, the preparations being completed, the day was named for the nuptials, which always took place at the town of the bridegroom. When the two tribes had assembled around the malae or public square, the bride appeared from a neighbouring house, attended by the old duennas in whose charge she had been reared, and followed by ten or twelve young women, all well greased from head to foot with scented cocoa-nut oil, and wearing wreaths of flowers, necklaces, and head-dresses of nautilus shells, with fine mats round their waists, and trailing far behind them. From the house the procession slowly moved along a pathway of native cloth to the centre of the malae, where sat the bridegroom, awaiting the approach of his bride, and where each one deposited the finest mats of the dowry, which they car-

ried in their hands; and there, on a snow-white mat, immediately before the young chief, the bride seated herself, the old duennas still by her side. With appropriate songs, the young women continued to parade from the house to the centre of the malae, still carrying mats and cloth, until the whole dowry was there heaped before the admiring multitude. The chastity of the daughters of the chiefs was the pride and the boast of their tribes. Old duennas were duly set apart to attend, and to guard their virtue and their honour from an early age. When a young chief, on assuming his chiefly position in his tribe, took the daughter of a noble to wife the whole of the tribes to which bridegroom and bride belonged assembled in the malae, and there the chastity of the bride was put to the test. If the bride passed the ordeal honourably and successfully, prolonged and vehement cheers proclaimed the honour of the tribe, and the dignity of the chief unsullied, and the virtue of the bride such as became one of her fair name. In the enthusiasm of the moment, her own immediate relatives cut their heads with stones until the blood flowed freely; and the old duennas, loud in songs that told of rivers flowing fast, torrents no banks could restrain, seas no reefs could check, proclaimed the triumph of their charge, and led the now trembling, bashful girl to the gaze of the excited and cheering multitude. Again and again cheers of applause greeted her as she paraded the malae, which she acknowledged only by the tears that silently stole down her cheeks. Then the young attendants reappeared, and, relieving the old duennas of their charge, led her to the house set apart for her private residence, where for several days she remained in seclusion. But there was a dark side to the scene. Should the ordeal reveal the disgrace of the tribe and the dishonour of the chief in the lost virtue of the daughter, her brothers, or even her father himself, rushed upon her with their clubs, and despatched her on the scene of her fatal exposure; every memorial of her life was destroyed and abhorred, her very name forgotten from the traditions of her tribe. After this ordeal, the property collected by the bridegroom's tribe was exhibited on the malae, and there formally presented to the father of the bride and his tribe. A grand feast closed the day, and a grand dance whiled away the hours of the night. It is, however, now becoming customary among the religious portion of the community to send love-letters to the girls when young men are smitten by their charms, instead of employing the services of friends to woo them. Of these remarkable epistles, the following is a specimen:—"This is my writing to you Saema. I am Tuliau. Very great is my love for you. Very great is my desire for you. This is my writing to you, Saema, to ask if you will become my wife." If the girl and her parents accede to the pithy request, the parties are duly married by the missionary; an exchange of property follows, according to the rank of the bride and bridegroom, and the ceremony is ended.—*Polynesian Reminiscences; or Life in the South Pacific Islands.*

THE Legislature during the late Session having passed "An Act to assist Tenants in the purchase of the Fee-simple of their Farms," by advancing to the Tenant ONE HALF of the amount agreed upon by the Proprietor and Tenant, as the Purchase Money of his Farm—

The Commissioner of Public Lands hereby gives notice to all Tenants

desirous of availing themselves of the privilege of the above recited Act, that he is now prepared to ASSIST SUCH TENANTS in the purchase of their Farms, as in manner and extent provided under such Act.

FORM OF APPLICATION and full particulars may be obtained at the office of Crown Lands, Colonial Building, Charlottetown.

JOHN ALDOUS, Commissioner.

Public Lands Office, May 8, 1865.

[mch 20