Pambu

The monthly newsletter of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau,
Research School of Pacific Studies,
Australian National University, Canberra

No. 2 Executive Officer: Robert Langdon SEPTEMBER, 1968

'WONDERFUL' ISLANDS TALES WERE WRITTEN AT THE URGING OF R.L.S.

Two evocative and exciting novels about the South Sea Islands, which were written at the suggestion of the celebrated novelist Robert Louis Stevenson, are among a number of unpublished literary items that have been lent to the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau recently for copying.

The Bureau is part of the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Canberra. Its purpose is to locate unpublished documents of value concerning the Pacific Islands and obtain copies of them for four world libraries specialising in Pacific research. The four libraries are the National Libraries of Australia and New Zealand; the Mitchell Library, Sydney; and the Library of the University of Hawaii, Honolulu.

The two novels which the Bureau has recently received on loan for copying are the work of the late Harry J. Moors, an American, of Apia, Western Samoa.

Moors died in Samoa in March 1926 after more than 40 years in the islands. He was the author of a lively book of reminiscences entitled With Stevenson in Samoa (Boston, 1910).

Moors' book describes how Stevenson urged him to write down some of the 'wonderful stories' about his early career that he had related to Stevenson.

The book also tells how, shortly before Stevenson's death in 1894, Moors and Stevenson had planned to go to uninhabited Nassau Island, which Moors owned, so they could both do some serious writing, undisturbed.

Moors was one of the leading businessmen and planters in Apia when Stevenson first arrived there in December 1889. He was closely associated with the novelist throughout his five-year sojourn in Samoa.

Born in Detroit in 1854, Moors first went to Samoa in 1875, probably as a supercargo of a ship trading out of San Francisco.

After a second visit to Samoa in 1878, he entered the service of the Government of Hawaii (then an independent kingdom) and worked as an agent for the Board of Immigration. In that capacity, he made several voyages to the Marshall and Gilbert Islands to recruit labourers for Hawaii's sugar plantations.

The Marshalls and Gilberts in those days were raw, lawless places, where fierce islanders frequently fought each other, and picturesque and ruffianly European beachcombers were commonplace.

Moors had a number of adventures in these islands. Then, in 1883, he went to Samoa again, married a part-Samoan girl, and settled down.

In 1884, he established a wholesale and retail business in Apia with one, E.A. Grevsmuhl; and two years later, he set up in business on his own account. By the time Stevenson arrived in Apia, Moors was a prosperous man and a leading figure in the local business and planting world.

Having been forewarned of the famous novelist's arrival in Samoa, Moors made a point of meeting him and his entourage - partly, no doubt, with an eye to business - as soon as Stevenson's chartered schooner Equator dropped anchor in Apia harbour.

'At that time,' Moors recalled in With Stevenson in Samoa, 'there was but one hotel in Apia, and as it badly needed to be "under new management," I invited the party...to stay at my house. This was the beginning of a long acquaintance.'

Moors said that after the Stevensons had stayed with him for some time, they rented a small cottage nearby; but even then the novelist still spent a large part of his time at his house.

'Often during the fine evenings,' Moors wrote, 'he would sit on my balcony facing the moonlit sea; and he would relate in his most engaging way some of his experiences and adventures to eastward in the Marquesas and Tahiti groups, and then carry me with him in a dissertation on the wildly savage Gilberts. I was familiar

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with all the different islands, and having visited them much earlier than he had, I was able to point out how conditions had been modified by the arrival of white settlers....'

Moors recorded that when the Stevensons decided to make their home in Samoa, R.L.S. approached him to look out for a suitable property. Moors arranged for the novelist to inspect a number of properties, among which was Vailima, an estate behind Apia of 400 acres. Stevenson bought it for $4,000.

The novelist and his family then went off on a voyage to Sydney, leaving Moors to supervise the construction of a temporary house for them at Vailima, pending the erection of a permanent one.

On their return, Stevenson again spent much of his time in Moors' house, where he wrote A Footnote to History, an account of Samoa's political troubles over the previous eight years.

One of Stevenson's biographers, Elsie Noble Caldwell, has recorded that Stevenson became less friendly with Moors as time went on because Moors overcharged him 'in nearly all his dealings.'

However, Moors' own account gives the impression that great cordiality always reigned between them; that Moors had the privilege of reading most of Stevenson's Samoan works in manuscript; and that he and Stevenson spent many hours discussing the novelist's literary projects.

On such occasions, Moors wrote, 'all reserve was thrown aside; we talked to each other as man to man, and friend to friend.'

It was in one of these frank discussions, about the end of 1893, that Stevenson suggested that Moors should try his own hand at authorship.

Moors, who had recently returned from the World's Fair in Chicago, had severely criticised Stevenson over The Wrecker, which had just appeared, and which the novelist had written in collaboration with his step-son, Lloyd Osbourne.

Stevenson took Moors' plain-speaking in good part, and declared that if he could only get away somewhere and work undisturbed, he might accomplish something better.

Moors suggested that Stevenson should try Nassau Island, an uninhabited atoll several hundred miles east of Samoa, which Stevenson had visited in the Janet Nichol in 1890. Moors had recently bought the atoll from a fellow-American for $4,000.

At the mention of Nassau, Stevenson declared brightly that it was 'the very thing.' "We will go down there together', he said, 'and I'll see that you write down some of those wonderful stories you have told me, of your early experiences among the islands. You can do it, Moors - do it admirably, I'm sure - and I'll help you over all the rough places. In return, you will be able to help me in many ways.'

Moors recorded that although he had never written anything apart from 'a scattering lot of political documents,' he readily consented to 'make an effort in the direction indicated,' although he scarcely meant his promise to be taken seriously.

Not long afterwards, he went to Nassau and set a party of islanders to work clearing away vegetation, planting coconuts, and otherwise improving the atoll's 350 acres.

On Moors' return to Apia, Stevenson took a lively interest in his account of the work at Nassau, and the pair drank 'a quiet toast' to their 'future happiness in Elysian fields.'

However, the Moors-Stevenson literary partnership on Nassau was not destined to eventuate, for Moors went off on another business trip to the United States, and while he was there, Stevenson died.

'All our plans were shattered in an instant,' Moors wrote quaintly. But Stevenson's words of encouragement to him were not forgotten; and eventually he began writing the story of his early Islands career in the form of a novel. It turned out that he had so much material that he wrote two novels.

One he called The Tokanoa: A Plain Tale of Some Strange Adventures in the Gilberts. The other was entitled Tapu: A Tale of Adventure in the South Seas. Both tales were allegedly compiled 'from the diary of John T. Bradley, labor agent.'

For Tapu, Moors got an old friend, Arthur Mahaffy, a brilliant British colonial administrator in the Pacific, to write a preface. Mahaffy, who had then spent 15 years in the South Seas, said that Tapu was 'a most wonderful book,' of remarkable accuracy, and quite surprising detail and local color.

'As I read the book,' he went on, 'the glare of the equatorial sun on the snow-white coral beaches, the deep shade of the dim maniapa or "speak house," the wonderful virtusoity of the ruioa or Gilbert Island dance, all of these and many other features of Island life came back to me.'

Mahaffy was similarly generous in his praise for other aspects of Tapu, and wound up with the remark that Moors probably knew more about the South Seas than anyone living.

Had Tapu been published, and had it taken the public's fancy in the same way as it took Mahaffy's, it would clearly have been a bestseller.

However, for some reason - possibly because Moors' business ventures in the islands had made him independent of the proceeds of literary endeavours - neither Tapu nor The Tokanoa got beyond the typescript stage.

The typescripts were still among Moors' papers when he died in 1926, and they have remained in his family ever since.

About a year ago, one of Moors' daughters, Mrs Priscilla ~~Munsch~~ Muench, of Manila, Philippines, happened to look through the novels, and, wondering whether they might yet be publishable, she sent them to a Suva friend, the Venerable C.W. Whonsbon-Aston, to see if he could do anything with them.

Archdeacon Whonsbon-Aston sought the advice of Mr Stuart Inder, editor of the Pacific Islands Monthly. Mr Inder suggested that, regardless of whether a publisher might be found, Mrs ~~Munsch~~ Muench should ensure that the novels were preserved for study by Pacific scholars by allowing the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau to make microfilm copies of them for deposit in the four Pacific research libraries.

Mrs ~~Munsch~~ Muench agreed to this suggestion. She also gave the Bureau permission to allow the Department of Pacific History at the Australian National University to seek a publisher for her father's work. Thus, there is now a chance that the two novels will yet ~~receive~~ achieve the dignity of print, and that Robert Louis Stevenson's faith in her father's literary ability will be justified after three-quarters of a century.

THE DISADVANTAGES OF SPEAKING NORFOLKESE

When the people of Pitcairn Island were transferred to Norfolk Island in 1856 because it was feared that Pitcairn would become overpopulated, they took with them the quaint Anglo-Tahitian speech that had been evolved by their ancestors, the mutineers of the Bounty and their Tahitian wives.

On Norfolk Island, the Pitcairn Island language developed new forms, and it is now known to linguists as Norfolkese. Until World War II, it was widely spoken among the Norfolk Islanders. It has disappeared to a large extent since then because of the influx of settlers and tourists from New Zealand and the Australian mainland.

Until Mr E.H. Flint, lecturer in English at the University of Queensland, went to Norfolk Island a few years ago, no outsider had ever made a thorough study of Norfolkese.

However, a file of correspondence recently lent to the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau for copying by Mrs Mary Pinney, of Bowral, New South Wales, shows that Norfolkese was a matter of considerable interest in official circles in the 1930s.

Mrs Pinney is the widow of the late Captain C.R. Pinney, M.C., who was Administrator of Norfolk Island from 1932 to 1937.

In a letter which Captain Pinney wrote in 1937 to the Commonwealth Librarian, Mr Kenneth Binns, he said the Norfolk Islanders were 'greatly at the mercy of more educated men of little principle' because Norfolkese was their only means of communication.

Captain Pinney said he was sending Mr Binns 'a short vocabulary of the Norfolk Island lingo,' which, although not complete, would give him some idea of limits of expression of the lingo and would enable him to form a fair opinion of 'the mental handicap the islanders have been suffering from.'

Captain Pinney then gave a couple of examples of the language. The expression 'Logan bin kick im', he said, meant 'he has an ugly face.' This phrase had had its origin in an incident when a man was kicked in the face by a horse named Logan which resulted in his face being permanently damaged.

Another expression, 'Ee's a Snell' meant "he is a man of very dirty habits.' This phrase originated with a very dirty man named Snell.

'When Norfolk Island children first attend either of the local State schools,' Captain Pinney said, 'they have to be taught English before their education can be proceeded with. Two local teachers are utilised for this purpose.

'Education proceeds in what is to all intents and purposes a foreign language to the children, as in most cases English is only spoken in school, and, if at all, is little used at home or school.

Children of Australian parentage readily learn the lingo and use it in their intercourse with the Norfolk Islanders.

'Many of the adult Norfolk Islanders who were educated at the local school have now, through neglect, a very slight knowledge of English. This causes them to readily misunderstand any instructions or observations addressed to them. Thus handicapped they are greatly at the mercy of more educated men of little principle.'

Captain Pinney said that over the previous few years an attempt had been made to cope with the loss of school influence by forming a debating club and establishing a school lending library. One of the aims of the lending library was to try to cultivate a habit of reading among the children, and, in this way, insinuate simple literature into homes in the hope that the elders would be persuaded to read occasionally and perhaps cause more English to be spoken by their families.

Replying to Captain Pinney's letter, Mr Binns said he had glanced through the Norfolkese vocabulary and had been astounded at the 'primitive nature' of the language.

'It certainly seems to me that every effort should be made to break them of the lingo and I am hopeful that our book service may be helpful in this direction,' he said.

Mr Binns added: 'I trust that you will allow me to keep the vocabulary, as I would like to have it bound and made a permanent item in our library, for it will have a considerable historical interest and reference value in connection with the history of Norfolk Island....'

There is nothing in the correspondence of Captain Pinney to indicate whether or not Mr Binns did keep the vocabulary for his library, now the National Library of Australia. However, the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau has ascertained that the vocabulary is not catalogued in the library's manuscripts section; and it would appear that this valuable item has now been lost.

The preservation of Captain Pinney's private correspondence during his five-year administration of Norfolk Island is some consolation. This correspondence includes letters to and from Senator Sir George Pearce, the Minister in Charge of Territories at that time, and letters to and from Mr J.R. Halligan, the Officer in Charge of the Territories Branch of the Prime Minister's Department.

Captain Pinney's papers are being copied on microfilm for the member libraries of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau - the National

Libraries of Australia and New Zealand; the Mitchell Library, Sydney; and the Library of the University of Hawaii, Honolulu.

The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau is part of the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University. Its purpose is to locate and obtain copies of unpublished documents of value concerning the Pacific Islands for its member libraries.

The Bureau's Executive Officer, Mr Robert Langdon, would be interested to hear from anyone possessing, or knowing of, any such documents.

WHEN THINGARU TERRORISED ESPIRITU SANTO

The story of a vain attempt to capture a New Hebridean outlaw called Thingaru, who in 1911 was terrorising the people of the island of Espiritu Santo, is told in a lively, unpublished diary, now in the possession of Mrs. B.L. Tyler, of Bowral, New South Wales.

The diary was kept by Maurice M. Witts, Mrs. Tyler's father, who had a copra plantation at Hog Harbour, Espiritu Santo. Witts, an Australian veteran of the Boer War, died in 1966 at the age of 89.

His diary describes how Thingaru boasted that he would kill all the white people of Espiritu Santo, and then the natives. It tells, too, how Witts was appointed a temporary commandant of police, and how, with a body of native policemen, he marched many miles through Santo's jungles trying to capture Thingaru - without success.

Witt's diary for 1911 is the second of his journals which his daughter has unearthed and has lent to the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau for copying.

The first volume was for the year 1905. This gives a vivid account of a planter's problems and difficulties in a remote part of the New Hebrides, and describes, among other things, a gruesome custom in which the widow of a deceased chief publicly committed suicide by hanging herself from a tree.

PLAN TO EXPLORE NEW GUINEA BY BALLOON

A German plan of 1913 to explore New Guinea by balloon is outlined in a valuable unpublished history of civil aviation in New

Guinea which has been lent to the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau for copying by the Commonwealth Department of Civil Aviation.

The history, which is in diary form, was compiled for the Civil Aviation Department over a period of six years by Mr. Ian Grabowsky, a pilot and manager in New Guinea for Guinea Airways Ltd. in the 1930's.

Mr. Grabowsky's history fills more than 1,700 foolscap pages of typescript. It deals in great detail with the period, 1925-1935. Information is quoted from numerous published and unpublished sources, but no attempt has been made to write it up as a literary narrative.

Referring to the balloon plan for the exploration of New Guinea, the history records that the cost was estimated at about three million marks, and that this was to be divided among Germany, Britain and Holland.

The Grand Duke of Hesse was the patron of the scheme, and Count Zeppelin, other balloon experts, and leaders in the fields of science and finance were members of the duke's committee. Ships and a dirigible balloon were to be chartered for two years.

However, the scheme did not eventuate, either because of lack of money or because of the world political situation.

BUREAU'S FILM LIBRARY IS GROWING STEADILY

The microfilm library of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau has grown steadily since the Bureau became fully operational on July 1.

To mid-September, there were a dozen titles in the Bureau's library - these being negative microfilms of unpublished documents of value concerning the Pacific Islands that the Bureau has located in various parts of the world.

Copies of the microfilms are deposited in the four world libraries that are sponsoring the Bureau. These are the National Libraries of Australia and New Zealand; the Mitchell Library, Sydney; and the Library of the University of Hawaii, Honolulu.

Details of the Bureau's first 12 microfilms, which cover seven Pacific territories, are:

No. of film	Title	No. of frames
PMB 1	Diary for the year 1905, kept at Hog Harbour, New Hebrides, by Maurice M. Witts, a copra planter.	89
PMB 2	Genealogies of the Papuan people at the Roman Catholic mission station of St Paul the Apostle at Weipa, Mekeo District, Papua. The genealogies date from 1904.	353
PMB 3	Notes on Tongan history and Tongan legends by J. Egan Moulton.	96
PMB 4	Miscellaneous papers of the Roman Catholic Church in the North Solomon Islands covering the years 1900-1936.	526
PMB 5	Papers of Rupert C. Garsia, Administrator of Nauru from 1933 to 1938.	71
PMB 6	Notes sur les Moeurs et Coutumes des Fujuges (a Papuan tribe) by Father P. Fastre.	445
PMB 7	A History in diary form of Civil Aviation in New Guinea, 1913-1935.	1,746
PMB 8	Diary for the year 1911, kept at Hog Harbour, New Hebrides, by Maurice M. Witts, a copra planter.	76
PMB 9	"Tapu: A Tale of Adventure in the South Seas," a novel, by Harry J. Moors.	459
PMB 10	"The Tokanoa: A Plain Tale of Some Strange Adventures in the Gilberts," a novel, by Harry J. Moors.	440
PMB 11	Papers of Captain C.R. Pinney, M.C., Administrator of Norfolk Island from 1932 to 1937.	133
PMB Doc. 1	"Taumua Lelei," a monthly Roman Catholic newspaper in Tongan, for the years 1929-1939.	531