THE SOUL CATCHERS.

A SINGULAR CUSTOM OF THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS.

The Way the Natives In the Days Before Civilization Had Fully Marked Them For Its Own Used to Get Even With Their Enemies.

A little while ago while turning over some mementos of many years spent in the Pacific islands I came across a small circle of fine cane about two inches in diameter. From the side toward the center a delicate network of the fibers of some plant was constructed, leaving a small hole in the center large enough for, say, a bee to crawl through. The article weighed less than a quarter of an ounce; yet, small and harmless as it appeared, it is not so very many years ago that it and others like it were objects of deadly terror to the natives of many of the Pacific islands, particularly those of Manahiki (Humphrey island), for the simple looking thing was a "soul catcher"—that is, a destroyer of human life.

Manahiki is one of a group of low lying atoll islands to the north-northwest of Samoa, and its people today are about the best educated of all the Malayo-Polynesian people. They elect a king and parliament, have one of the most beautifully adorned churches in the Pacific islands, and nearly all the younger members of the community can now not only speak but read and write English. The island is—for an atoll—unusually fertile and the people a fine, stalwart, handsome copper colored race. The main industries are the making of "copra" (dried cocoanut) and diving for pearl shell.

"Soul catching" in the heathen days, prior to 1863, could be and was practiced by any one who desired revenge or the life of an enemy. Indeed, although the people were nominally Christians in 1873, it was still in vogue. The modus operandi is very simple. Say that two men, Rika and Tetoro, quarrel. Rika accuses Tetoro of going out into the lagoon at nighttime, lifting his (Rika's) fish traps and abstracting the contents. He therefore demands compensation. Tetoro denies the theft. The relatives of both men take sides, and the quarrel assumes all the elements of a feud with bloodshed. It may be that Tetoro is a man of means or chiefly rank and influence and treats his accuser with scorn.

"Very well," the injured Rika cries. "If I cannot get justice from you I shall snare your soul, and you will die of a wasting sickness."

Tetoro, even if he is innocent, begins to feel uneasy at this threat and, while vigorously denying the theft, offers Rika a present of a pig to end the matter. Rika's relatives at once clamor not only for their original demands, but for the pig as well. Possibly a free fight ensues, and Rika's people get badly used, and threats of "soul snaring" are heard on all sides.

Then Rika's wife makes the snare for Tetoro's soul. Taking her mat out into the village square or upon a well frequented road or path, she suspends the snare from the branches of trees or sticks placed in the ground in such a position that she can closely watch the orifice in the center of the square. Rika's friends, male and female, come with her. They bring food and eat it and throw fragments under the snare to attract the flies, with which the island is infested. If but one fly crawls through the hole Tetoro is a dead man, unless he suddenly gives in and allows himself to be bled, for not only do Rika's people watch the snare, but his own as well. No one of them would dare to attempt to destroy the snare. The death of the interferer by occult power would certainly follow.

And so for hours and hours—sometimes for days—many pairs of eyes watch the little circle of cane, and Tetoro and his friends are now ready to yield, but feel that still more extortionate demands may be made. Then at last a fly is seen to crawl through, and a shout goes through the village.

"Ua hopo te lago! Ua hopo te lago!" ("A fly has passed through.") Tetoro hears the cries and immediately imagines he feels ill. His wife and relatives crowd about him and try to cheer him up, but his face assumes a melancholy look, and as the time passes on he refuses his food. Perhaps he may confess that he did steal Rika's fish and tremblingly offer to make full restitution if Rika will catch a fly and make it go through the circle from the reverse side through which the first one entered voluntarily. Usually this is done, and what might have become a lasting family feud had Tetoro died of "funk," through being bewitched, ends up by the payment of so much property to Rika, and a feast for which both parties provide the viands.—Pall Mall Gazette.

No Good to the Landlord.

The minister and the landlord were talking matters over about a person who wished to become one of the latter's tenants.

"Morally he is sound, but financially he is weak," said the minister.

"Ah, weel," replied the factor, "in that case he's a guid enough sitter for you, but no for me." And the negotiations were declared "off."—London Telegraph.

That Hurried Him.

Markley—Yes, I did lend him $10.

Newitt—Well, I suppose he'll pay you back some day, but you can't make him hurry.

Markley—I don't know about that. The mere sight of me walking along the street has had that effect upon him several times lately.—Philadelphia Press.

Are you satisfied to do nothing today except tell of the wonderful things you intend to do tomorrow?—Atchison Globe.

POPULAR SCIENCE.

The microbe of the tuberculosis may live on a book 103 days, as has been shown by experiment.

Of 1,000 parts of the moon 576 are visible to us on the earth; 424 parts remain hidden absolutely to man's eyes.

Without its atmosphere, which serves as a coverlet to protect it against the fearful cold of space, the surface of the earth would be frozen like that of the airless moon.

A certain duration of a luminous impression is necessary to produce an effect on the retina. Hence it is that we do not see a very rapidly moving object, such as a bullet fired from a gun.

If this globe were cooled down to 200 degrees below zero of centigrade, it would be covered with a sea of liquefied gas thirty-five feet deep, of which about seven feet would be liquid oxygen.

Blood travels from the heart through the arteries ordinarily at the rate of about twelve inches per second. Its speed through the capillaries is at the rate of three one-hundredths of an inch per second.

Fishing Through Street Gratings.

In Winchester, England, it is quite a common thing to see men fishing through the street gratings. Under the High street there flow several streams which ultimately discharge into the river Itchen, a noted trout stream. These streams receive the storm and surface water from the street by means of the ordinary street grating. The line is dropped through and fastened to the end of a stick small enough to go through the grate. When the fish is hooked, the line and stick are dropped through the grating, and the fisherman rushes to the point where the stream emerges from under the street and is there able to recover his line and land his fish.

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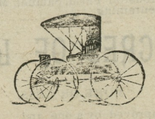

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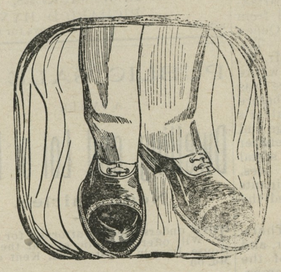

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