

"POWER COMES OUT OF THE BARREL OF A GUN"

(Mao-tse-tung).

Never was the Royal Navy expected to do so much, with such limited resources, in such an unusual role, as it was during the second half of the 19th century in the Pacific Ocean. And never, save possibly in wartime, were the commanding officers of British warships called upon to exercise such varied, difficult and completely independent judgments in such an unusual role as they were then.

With but a handful of ships based on Vancouver, Hong Kong and Sydney, their operational duties covered literally millions of square miles of ocean, speckled by several scores of islands, predominantly in the Western Pacific. But the vessels based in Vancouver did not then, as they did occasionally later, penetrate west of the 180th meridian. So much for the Navy's range of operations.

Nor was their role the traditional one of the defence of the realm against Her Majesty's enemies. It lay wholly in the field of the exercise of the civil power - in endeavouring to keep some degree of peace between a heterogeneous collection of islands and their indigeneous peoples, who were not, until towards the end of the 19th century, subject to Her Majesty's jurisdiction, and folks of other nationalities who had come to proselytize, to trade, or merely to batten on the native peoples. Thus, the naval officers had to be prepared to deal with Melanesian, Micronesian or Polynesian peoples on the one hand, and missionaries, traders or beachcombers on the other - groups whose aims and ways of life differed beyond any comparison. Apart from the frustrating problems posed by the labour trade - the recruiting (blackbirding) principally of natives from the Solomon Islands or the New Hebrides for work in the canefields of Queensland - other groups such as the Gilbert, Marshall and Caroline Islands were by no means without their problems, even if they were different in kind and degree.

Since the title of this tale relates to the Gilbert Islands, it is necessary to paint in the background to the tale, since the inhabitants of those islands, their social structure and their way of life bear no comparison with the present day inhabitants and society of the Republic of Kiribati. One of the earliest authentic accounts of the clash between the Gilbertese and visiting Europeans comes from Commodore Wilkes of the United States Exploring Expedition, whose two ships, the U.S.S. Flying Fish and the U.S.S. Peacock visited those islands in 1841. Partly probably as a result of an unfortunate call at the island of Tabiteuea (Drummond Island), where one of his crew was killed and he sent an expedition ashore which killed eleven natives and burnt down their capital, Utiroa, to the ground, he wrote of the Gilbertese:-

"The character of these islanders is the most savage of any that we met with; their ferocity led to the belief that they were cannibals, although no positive proofs were seen of it. They are under no control whatever, and possess little of the characteristic hospitality usually found in savage nations. It was observed also that their treatment of each other exhibited a great want of feeling, and, in many instances, passions and propensities indicative of the lowest state of barbarism. War on all the islands except Makin appears to be the principal business of the people".

The islands were then little more than what one might term 'ragamuffin republics', with groups owing allegiance to local uea (literally 'king', but more correctly 'chief') and who were, with constantly shifting alliances, as Wilkes rightly surmised, principally engaged in inter-clan warfare.

Nor were conditions some 35 years later much better, principally by reason of the substitution by the islanders of their sharks' teeth swords and protective 'armour' and helmet made of woven sennit for firearms, and because of the widespread introduction of liquor by the traders, principally from Sydney. Thus, a Captain Fred Ohlsen, Master of the schooner "Belle Brandon"; writing to the Press on his return to Auckland from a visit to those islands early in 1876, said:-

"I regret to have to report another murder at Abaiang, Gilbert Group. This is the second within six months on two adjoining islands and this will not be the last unless the natives are severely punished ... The last victim was an old man named Keyes, formerly of Fiji. It seems he had a bottle of scented hair oil this party wanted the old man to give him; he bounced him out of half of it. He then came back and wanted the other half, which Keyes refused to give him; with that he drew a horse pistol and shot him dead on the spot... In fact the name English is a by-word for a coward among them and no wonder when we consider the number of British subjects that have been murdered among the different islands, without one of the murderers being punished. I could name about 30 or more, but I will only give a few islands. There is Tarawa where Sullivan was murdered six months before this murder in Abaiang. Some three or four years before that there were four white men killed. Next comes Abemama; there were 17 white traders murdered in cold blood to get their trade and the old rascal is alive still who was King at the time. The next is Nonouti, where three of the "Dancing Wave" crew were murdered".

Whilst perhaps some degree of exaggeration is permissible when expressed by a ship's master who was frequently involved in such unpleasant circumstances, the general tenor of his evidence is borne out by the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific who wrote as follows to the Secretary of State for the Colonies some nine years later:-

"The possession of firearms by the islanders not only renders murders more easy to effect but it engenders and fosters the desire to murder and urges on to the attempt.

The mere possession of a firearm acts as an intoxicant upon a native. He becomes drunk with the desire to kill somebody, and so distinguish himself as a fighting man. He is never at a loss for a cause of quarrel. Outside of his own petty tribe or sept every man is an enemy and there are always some old scores to be paid off when the opportunity offers.

Upon first contact with the native we find him savage, brutal and cruel where he dares to be so. Europeans of adventurous disposition or of damaged reputation then visit or settle down among the islands. They trade with the native in copra, beche de mer, tortoiseshell and not infrequently in men and women. In return they supply amongst other things arms, powder, lead, dynamite and spirits, and as impossible as some persons declare it to be, the general effect of such intercourse is to make the savage more untruthful, treacherous and bloodthirsty than he was in his original state. The area over which his feuds extend is enlarged, the number of his individual murders is increased, and tribes reduced in number may become the slaves of the conquering party... a few natives (of the Kingsmill or Gilbert Group) are employed in Fiji, but in consequence of their ferocious, treacherous character and of their ignorance of all agricultural operations have never been held in much favour".

Again, writing in 1909, the Assistant High Commissioner for the Western Pacific stated:-

"They (the Gilbertese) were a particularly quarrelsome race, and a state of war existed almost permanently upon most of the larger islands of the group, in which the two main divisions of the islands were pitted against one another. Murders were a common

" occurrence; and affrays which resulted in the severe wounding of numbers of the different factions were marked by the destruction of food crops of the vanquished by the victors, and the consequent reduction of numbers of these unfortunates to a condition bordering on starvation".

Intermingled amongst the native communities were to be found representatives of three other groups - missionaries, traders and beachcombers, whose aspirations and ways of life inevitably clashed with those of their native neighbours. The missionaries, a small band of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, based in Boston, had come to the islands and established themselves on the island of Abaiang in 1857. But even they, as will be seen, were not always exempt from the ill-disposed attentions of the Gilbertese at times.

But it was the traders and beachcombers who were responsible as much as, if not more than, the Gilbertese for the numerous acts of violence which all too frequently occurred in those islands in the 19th century. True, not all traders were men of ill repute; thus Robert Corrie, a native of Liverpool and a resident of the island of Maiana, and Robert Randolph, a native of Worthing, Sussex, and a resident of Abaiang, were held in considerable respect by their communities, and the former acted as interpreter for Captain E.H.M. Davis, R.N., of H.M.S. Royalist who in 1892 visited every island in the Gilbert Group, raising the Union Jack, and at Butaritari declaring the islands to be a British Protectorate. But the traders in the Gilbert Islands during the second half of the 19th century were a polyglot collection - British, American, German, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Austrian, French, Russian, Dutch and Chinese - many of whom were, through their sales of liquor and firearms, not only responsible for the evil reputation of the Gilbertese, but in some cases for their own demise.

Two further elements in the background picture also merit mention. First, the exercise of the civil power was left almost wholly to the commanding officers of the British men-of-war even though, as already remarked, persons of a wide variety of nationalities were scattered throughout the islands. Thus, although there were American trading interests well established in Butaritari, missionary interests in Abaiang, and American citizens scattered throughout the group, there were only a very limited number of visits by American warships - reportedly the U.S.S. Saginaw and the U.S.S. Adirondack early on, and the U.S.S. Jamestown in May, 1870, and the U.S.S. Narragansett in August, 1872, the Jamestown levying a heavy fine in coconut oil on the natives of Abaiang for twice seriously assaulting and wounding a Hawaiian missionary, and the destruction of missionary property and agricultural crops. With well established German trading interests in Butaritari, as well as in the Marshall and Caroline Islands and Samoa, which made use of the Gilbert Islands as a reservoir of labour for their plantations in Samoa, it might be supposed that Germany might have taken a considerable part in the exercise of the civil power in the Gilbert Islands. But in the early years that was not so and the only notable visit of a German man-of-war was that of H.I.G.M.S. Mriadne to Abemama in the seventies.

The second element, in many ways the most serious of all, was the lack of any system of jurisdiction. Prior to the establishment of a British High Commission in the Pacific in 1878, the Royal Navy kept order amongst the islands in an essentially general manner and on a somewhat ad hoc basis. When a British subject was guilty of any serious crime, he was either taken to Australia or New Zealand for trial or, more often, deported to some other islands or to a neighbouring territory. The powers, such as they were, exercised by naval officers did however have some deterrent effect, and the traders were, as a rule, quite ready to bow to their decision in matters of dispute which came

before them. In like manner, when outrages were committed by natives, the commanding officer of the next warship visiting the place, after a careful investigation on the spot, dealt with the case as he thought best. Similarly, as offences committed by natives were often intimately bound up with offences committed by Europeans, such cases were similarly dealt with by naval officers.

This was just as well since, before 1878, no jurisdiction had been created which could competently take cognizance of offences committed by natives against British subjects in the Pacific beyond Her Majesty's possessions, and the infliction of punishment on British subjects for outrages against natives in the same regions would have been sure to incite a sense of injustice. But naval officers were powerless to take judicial cognizance of any offence committed by natives, none of whom were then subjects of Her Majesty, or of any offences committed by other European nationals.

Even after the enactment of the Pacific Order in Council of 1877 problems persisted, serious differences of opinion arising between the Chief Justice of Fiji (who was also Chief Judicial Commissioner for the Western Pacific and Acting High Commissioner) and the Senior Naval Officer on the Australian Station as to the authority by which it was to be determined whether any, and if so what, punishment should be inflicted on natives guilty of outrages against British subjects; the Chief Judicial Commissioner insisted that such decisions devolved upon him, whereas the naval authorities contended that it was a matter wholly dependent on the judgment of the naval officers on the spot, and with respect to which the High Commissioner had no jurisdiction. After extensive correspondence involving the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, and the Senior Naval Officer on the Australian Station it was decided that outrages committed by natives outside British jurisdiction were best dealt with by the fiction of declaring war in such circumstances on the natives, and it was determined by Her Majesty's Government that the naval authorities should be exclusively responsible for the performance of acts of war against native tribes and for determining that such acts were requisite but that, where it was practicable and would not cause unnecessary delay, the High Commissioner should be communicated with before action was taken. Thus, for example, as late as 1884 Commander W. Dyke Acland of H.M.S. Miranda reported to the High Commissioner that he had investigated the cause of the murder of the master of the schooner "John Hunt" and had punished the natives of the Malua tribe who lived in the bush near Espiegle Bay on the island of Malekula in the New Hebrides. Remarking that the tribe was still "unfriendly and hostile", he issued the following notice and implanted it on the seashore:-

"The Captain of the "John Hunt" having been killed in Bushman's Bay, Lat: 15° 59', 1 mile south of Espiegle Bay on the N.W. of Mallicolo, I have declared war on the Malua tribe, who are unfriendly. Master of vessels are hereby warned.

W. Dyke Acland, R.N., Commander".

Despite their lack of judicial authority before their appointment as Deputy Commissioners under the Pacific Order in Council of 1893, it is reassuring to note that the High Commissioner could inform the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1881 that:-

"I believe that in every case where (such) a reference has been made to me, I have concurred with the Commodore in considering that it (punishment) should, or should not be, inflicted; I have very rarely indeed been consulted as to the nature of the punishment, or informed beforehand what it was to be, but I have in almost all cases considered that the course adopted by the Commodore, or in accordance with his directions has been just and equitable."

In the light of the foregoing, especially the abnormally extensive powers conferred on naval officers, and on the virtually certain assumption that such commanding officers were neither trained nor educated in the use of legal and judicial powers, it might have been supposed that, at least prior to the enactment of the Orders in Council before mentioned, their sailing orders, as issued by the Senior Naval Officer on their station, would have provided them with some guidance in cases reported for their investigation and determination. But such was not the case as the following tale about Lieutenant Horace Pugh, R.N., of H.M.S. Renard, so aptly illustrates, and confirms the title of this tale.

On the 28th December, 1874, Robert Randolph, already mentioned, wrote to the Commodore on the Australian Station and informed him that one Cornelius Sullivan had been murdered by the natives on the adjacent island of Tarawa; he had so informed the commanding officer of H.M.S. Rosario during the visit of that vessel in August and asked that the death be inquired into.

On the 7th June, 1875, the Reverend Horace J. Taylor, a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, stationed on Abaiang, wrote to the Governor of Fiji in the following terms:-

"Last Christmas, Mr. Keyes, a British subject, was landed on this island by Capt. Eury. He received from Ten Timau, the king of this island, a writing giving full permission for Mr. Keyes to live in any part of this island that he (Mr. Keyes) might elect, and promising full protection to the said Mr. Keyes. On June 2nd Mr. Keyes was murdered with no provocation whatever. The murderer is at liberty. On the 26th October, 1874, Mr. Cornelius Sullivan was murdered on Tarawa, an island six miles south of this. The man who murdered him is also at liberty. Other murders have, I am told, been committed on this group. No notice has been taken of the murders. Unless some notice is taken of this murder, white men cannot live safely on these islands. Trusting that steps may be taken to punish the murderers, and do justice in these cases ...
Horace J. Taylor".

On the 30th July, 1875, A.O. Colcord, the master of the mission vessel "Morning Star", wrote to the United States Consul in Honolulu as follows:-

"Sir, When my Mate A.S. Swinton came off on board from the island of Marakei at 1 a.m. on Tuesday morning July 13th 1875 he reported being received by an irregular fusillade of muskets and that a crowd of armed men were stationed along the shore to clean him out, if, as they supposed, our boat were from a man of war come to punish the murderer of an Englishman at Abaiang called Keyes.

On the arrival of my brig the "Morning Star" at Abaiang, I found that a brutal murder had been committed and also that the natives of the island regarded the murder of a foreigner as a very small matter. I found an Englishwoman, Mrs. May Glover, with two helpless little children, one in arms, in the premises of the American Mission, and I was told that she would be brutally violated and her little ones probably killed if she were exposed to the heathen in a house by herself. I also found a general feeling of insecurity among the Mission and among foreigners, calling in my judgment, for the protection of a man of war.

Careful enquiry among the missionaries has developed the fact that some 80 murders have been committed since Jany. 1st 1875. With the exception of an Englishman named Sullivan and also a Chinaman, both traders on the island of Tarawa, all these murders are of natives and are committed by a comparatively few notorious rascals who get drunk seemingly on purpose to murder. They are distributed through the Gilbert Island Group and have everything their own way

"except at Apamama where the King does all the killing at his own will. With this exception there is no central power strong enough to keep the peace.

I have thought it wise to take depositions of the witnesses in the case of St. John C. Keyes, who was an Englishman by nationality, which I herewith submit. That of Mrs. May Glover marked "A", that of Rev. Horace Taylor marked "B", of Mr. Robert Randolph marked "C", and of Mr. A.S. Swinton marked "D".

I would also respectfully state that the matter of the destruction of the American Mission property at Abaiang is still unsettled, and the clemency once extended by the U.S.S. Jamestown has been mistaken for lack of power to enforce the demand made by the United States at the time.

I etc. A.O. Colcord, Master of the Morning Star".

Island of Abaiang, Gilbert Islands.

"Personally appeared Mistress May Glover, late of Birmingham, England, and being duly sworn deposes and says:-

"On the second (2nd) day of June, A.D. 1875, at or about 9 a.m. St. John Curtis Keyse belonging to Devonshire, England, residing by permit of and promise of protection from, the King, of Abaiang, was engaged in laying the foundation of a house, which while so engaged and surprised to look and see his feet up, as if he had been knocked down. I went out and called Mr. Keyse to come in, when the savage pointed one of two pistols at me. I crouched by the fence. Mr. Keyse got up and came to help me. Without a word the man fired a bullet through Mr. Keyse's head. I was so near that the powder burnt my eyes.

The savages threatened my personal safety and the safety of my two little children and I was kindly taken under the protection of the American Mission with whom I am now until I can escape to a christian country."

Mrs. May Glover.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 27th day of July at the Mission in Abaiang.

A.O. Colcord, Master of "Morning Star". "

Personally appeared Revd. H.J. Taylor, Am. Missionary at Abaiang, Gilbert Islands and being duly sworn deposes and says:-

"I heard on the afternoon of June 2nd 1875 that Mr. Keyes had been murdered at Tebunginako, a district of Abaiang about 5 miles north of the American and Hawaiian Mission. I immediately went up to the place and found a noisy crowd of armed natives. Mr. Keyes was shot through the heart and he was also wounded in the right arm, the bullet passing between the elbow and the wrist. We found that the friends of the murderer had taken sides with him and when Mr. Randolph the trader came up we decided that it was unsafe to permit Mrs. Glover to remain. I held the funeral the next day. Mrs. Glover asked me for the protection of the Mission premises and I knew both she and her children would be exposed to insult and abuse if not in jeopardy of personal safety and even of life unless thus protected. She has been and is now in the same dwelling and under the care of Mr. Harima, a Hawaiian teacher, member of this Mission".

Horace J. Taylor.

Subscribed to and sworn before me at Mission Station in Abaiang this 29th day of July, 1875.

A.O. Colcord, Master of "Morning Star". "

Personally appeared Robert Randolph and being duly sworn deposes and says:-

"I am a British subject, a resident of Worthing, Co. Sussex. I came here as a trader in 1864 and had property in Abaiang ever since. St. John Curtis Keyse landed in Abaiang Dec. 25th 1874. On the 29th December Mr. Keyse received the following protection -

(Original produced and read).

Know all men by these presents that I, King of Abaiang, hereby give my consent to Mr. St. John Curtiss Keyse, residing upon this island in my part thereof for the purpose of trading and so long as he conforms to my regulations, I hereby assure him of all reasonable protection for himself and property. Signed Ten Timau Abaiang, 29th Dec. 1874.

" Mr. Keyse was a grey-haired weakly man of some 64 years, quiet and inoffensive. He went to Tebunginako by direction of the King where he was engaged in the construction of a mill for dressing cocoanut fibre. About noon on June 2nd I was informed that Mr. Keyse had been shot dead and that Mrs. Glover and children were in great peril. I immediately took my boat and went 5 miles to the scene of the murder. I found Mr. Keyse dead having been shot by a native of Abaiang named Tagiao, the ball having passed through his right arm and into the left breast just below the left nipple. Got there shortly after Revd. J. Taylor. We decided to remove the body and Mrs. Glover and the children to the Mission and my place at Abaiang without delay. Mr. Taylor buried Mr. Keyse the next day.

Tagiao, the murderer, received warning and was sent by his friends in a war canoe to Marakei.

The murder of Cornelius Sullivan on Tarawa and the murder of Keyse has given the people an idea of impunity from punishment and I do not consider Mrs. Glover and her children safe out of the protection of the American Mission". R. Randolph.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 29th day of July, 1875.

A.O. Colcord, Master of "Morning Star".

American Missionary Packet "Morning Star" off the island of Abaiang July 30th 1875.

Personally appeared H.S. Swinton and being duly sworn deposes and says:-

"My name is Henry S. Swinton. I am a native of the Hawaiian Islands and the Mate of the "Morning Star". At 7 p.m. of Monday, July 19th, I was ordered to lower and bring off from the island of Marakei Gilbert Islands Revd. D. Karewho (?) and wife. On approaching land I heard an irregular fusillade of fire-arms which on landing appeared to come from 15 - 20 or more armed natives stationed at intervals along the beach. I was told that these men, armed with muskets, were the friends of the murderer of a white man named Keyse at Abaiang, and that my boat had been mistaken for a man of war boat which they were going to 'clean out' in case of any attempt to take or punish this murderer. And further deponent says not".

H.S. Swinton Jnr.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 30th day of July on board the "Morning Star".

A.O. Colcord, Master of the "Morning Star".

On the 8th September, 1875, W.J. Clipperton, Master of the schooner "Black Hawk" of Melbourne, also reported the murder of Keyse to the Captain of H.M.S. Barracouta then in Fiji, stressing the unprovoked nature of the murder, citing the case of other Europeans who had been violently attacked on other islands, and emphasizing the urgent need for a visit from a man-of-war to afford missionaries and traders some degree of protection. This report was forwarded to the Commodore, who notified the Admiralty on the 7th October, 1875 of this and other reports and stated that -

"So soon as I have a vessel of war at my disposal I shall despatch one to enquire into these outrages and at the same time to visit the outlying small islands of the adjoining groups".

The Foreign Office having also been notified of the murder of Keyse addressed the Secretary of the Admiralty as follows on the 28th June, 1876:-

"... I am directed by the Earl of Derby to request that you will move the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to give directions that the circumstances of this murder may be enquired into by the Commander of any of H.M. ships of war which may be available in those waters, with a view to such reparation being exacted as the circumstances of the case may require".

After receiving shortly afterwards copies of the affidavits already quoted, the Foreign Office addressed a further letter to the Admiralty on the 5th July asking that action be taken -

"with the view to such redress being exacted from the Natives of the Islands where the murders were committed, as after due enquiry the circumstances may warrant".

But, so long did mails take in those days between Australia and the United Kingdom that action had already been taken some months earlier. Thus, on the 8th March, 1876, Commodore Hoskins issued the following sailing orders to Lieutenant Horace J.M. Pugh, as follows:-

" Sailing Orders - "Renard".

1. You are to proceed in the steamer "Hero" to Auckland, New Zealand, where you will find H.M. Schooner "Renard".
2. Having taken command of the "Renard" and she being in all respects ready for sea you are to proceed in her to Levuka (Fiji).
3. You are then without delay to proceed to Abaiang in the Gilbert Group and enquire very carefully and closely into all the circumstances attending the murder of an Englishman named St. John Curtis Keyes, in June of last year as detailed in the accompanying documents.
4. By them, it appears that he was residing on that island by permission of the King himself and was actually employed by him at the time of the murder.
5. The American missionaries will probably be your best sources of information and may be expected to aid you as Interpreters, but you should be very careful not to compromise them with the natives or risk their safety being endangered by doing so.
6. Should you be satisfied that the murder of Keyes was, as it appears to have been, an unprovoked and wanton outrage, you are to use all the means in your power to secure the person of the murderer Tagiao and should you succeed in doing so you are to require the King or Chief of Abaiang, under whose protection Keyes was, to inflict on him condign punishment.
7. In doing so you should be most careful to discriminate between the individual murderer and the natives generally and to let the punishment have a purely judicial aspect.
8. Should you not be able to secure the murderer you are to inflict such other punishment on the village or tribe to which he belongs as the circumstances of the case may appear to you to render proper and desirable but in such case taking care to consult very carefully the interests and safety of white residents.
9. You are to do all in your power to impress the natives with the conviction that though the visits of Men of War for the protection of White People are few yet they are sure and to prevent generally the recurrence of such outrages in future.
10. Having carried out these instructions to the best of your ability you are then to proceed to Tarawa and act in the same manner with reference to the murder in October 1874 of the Englishman named Cornelius Sullivan...
11. Having effected this you are to visit such remaining islands of that Group and of the Ellice Group as may seem desirable...

- "12. You are then to proceed to the New Hebrides...
13. As I may possibly despatch another of HM Ships to the Line Islands you are to leave information of your movements at each place you visit...
14. You are to inform me of your proceedings at every opportunity...
15. You are to return to Sydney when your provisions are exhausted.

Given at Sydney the 8th March, 1876.

A.H. Hoskins.

Lieutenant Horace J.M. Pugh,
Commanding H.M. Schooner "Renard".

Lieutenant Pugh spent eight days at the island of Tarawa inquiring into the death of Cornelius Sullivan in October, 1874, but without arriving at any satisfactory explanation or solution of the crime. His record of 'Minutes of Proceedings' is not particularly informative, but his "Notes on facts brought out in the minutes of proceedings" give a brief account of the circumstances in which the crime was committed.

The first witness whom he interviewed was one Henry Williams, a British subject resident on Tarawa, of whose evidence he gives the following summary:-

"Sullivan was murdered in October 1874. Sullivan told him (Williams) three days previous to his death that the natives were going to kill him because he would not allow them into his house. One native had already tried to kill Sullivan with "a whale spade". A Drummond Island boy ten years old Tenteaoa had killed Sullivan. The natives killed and ate Tenteaoa and I myself saw some of them that had done so".

Another unnamed witness stated that the boy, whom Sullivan had brought with him from Drummond Island, had run away but had been brought back in a canoe, and that, when Sullivan went to the canoe to chastise him, the boy stabbed him with 'a bayonet'. He said he had been told that the natives killed the boy to avenge Sullivan.

Another witness, a William Murdoch, stated that he knew nothing at first-hand about the murder, but that he had heard that the boy had been killed and eaten by the natives, a fact which Lieutenant Pugh accepted as the truth.

Robert Randolph, already mentioned, said that he had been told by Sullivan that the natives intended to kill him as "he had spoken the truth on board H.M.S. Rosario as to the state of the island".

Nei Tekaiie, the Gilbertese wife of Sullivan, stated that he had raised a canoe paddle to strike the boy for having run away from his service, but that the boy stabbed him under the arm. She added that Sullivan was always thrashing the boy as well as herself. She said that she had asked her husband if the boy should be killed and that "he had made a sign of assent".

Other natives confirmed that Sullivan was raising a canoe paddle to strike the boy, when the latter "thrust a bayonet which was lying in the canoe lashed to a bamboo" into Sullivan's side, and that he at once fell mortally wounded. They stated that Sullivan lived for about five hours after the stabbing and confirmed the wife's story that he had told them to kill the boy, which the natives stated they did before Sullivan died.

Lieutenant Pugh spent several days separately examining the various chiefs under whose protection Sullivan lived, as well as chiefs of the opposite faction, but was at length compelled - and all the chiefs agreed - to accept the somewhat improbable account of the occurrence as the true one. He told the chiefs, however, that the evidence as to

the crime was unsatisfactory and that they should have immediately reported Sullivan's death to the nearest white man, and should do so on the death of any white man in future.

The inquiry into the death of Keyes on Abaiang was, however, a much more formal affair, conducted on the deck of H.M.S. Renard, with witnesses called, documents produced, orders issued, and fairly detailed minutes of the proceedings kept. Before copies of the latter reached Sydney, however, the Commodore had already received a letter left by Lieutenant Pugh at Abaiang, which was brought to Sydney by Commander Digby of H.M.S. Sappho, which the Commodore had detailed to visit the Gilbert Islands in support of H.M.S. Renard. As a result of that letter, the Commodore wrote to the Secretary to the Admiralty as follows:-

"Commander Digby reports as follows:-

"Lieutenant Pugh has carried out your orders respecting the Abaiang murder firmly and thoroughly and without compromising the missionary, who on the contrary considers his position strengthened by the inflicted punishment".

I am awaiting the arrival of Renard to receive full particulars but at present from what Commander Digby has told me verbally, I believe there is every reason to be satisfied with Lieutenant Pugh's conduct in this grave and difficult matter".

The first witnesses at the inquiry were the Reverend Taylor and Robert Randolph, whose evidence followed substantially that already cited in their original reports on the death of Keyes. To that report by the Reverend Taylor should, however, be added the following additional evidence given at the inquiry:-

"King Ten Timau being away at Butaritari Mr. Randolph and I made complaint to the uncle of Ten Timau in whom we considered what authority there was had been invested during the absence of the King, and demanded punishment of the murderer....

The natives themselves say that there was not the slightest provocation for the murder. On going to Butaritari to attend the general meeting of the Mission, I spoke to Ten Timau about the murder. He said it was a pity but he had nothing to say about it as the man was now at Marakei and therefore out of his jurisdiction. The King's brother has since been to Marakei but I am told took no steps whatever towards having him arrested. I have remonstrated several times with the King since and warned him that should a man of war come in he might suffer as he was responsible for the non-punishment of the murderer, he having given Mr. Keyes written protection (document produced); he has only answered by sneers, and the common talk among the natives, including the King himself, is that the missionaries lie and that no man of war will ever come.

The natives coming to my house have said "A white man is of no account; they are only dogs running up and down the beach; kill them, nothing will ever be done".

Robert Randolph in his evidence confirmed the discussion with the uncle of king Ten Timau.

A letter was thereupon sent to the king by Lieutenant Pugh bidding him to attend on board on the following day "to explain the circumstances relevant to the murder of Mr. St. John Curtis Keyes, a British subject residing in your dominion with your written permission". The King duly arrived on board accompanied by his chief minister, Te Kabunare, and the inquiry recommenced in the presence also of the Reverend Taylor and Robert Randolph, who acted as interpreter.

Lieutenant Pugh explained to the king that one of the duties of the Royal Navy was "to afford protection to the free intercourse and commerce of British subjects trading in those islands" and added that visits by men of war, even if belated, would take place to ensure justice and effect punishment where necessary. He further explained that the king, chief or headman of any place would always be held responsible for the acts of his subjects to the British Government. The king was first asked to identify the paper which he had signed giving protection to Keyes, and he did so. The minutes of proceedings then continued as follows:-

Lt. Pugh - Was there to your knowledge any provocation for the murder of Mr. Keyes by one of your subjects, you being held responsible as you know for the actions of your people ?

The king - There was no reason for the attack.

Lt. Pugh - Then why was not the murderer immediately brought to justice ?

The king - I was not here at the time.

Lt. Pugh - You were here shortly afterwards ?

The king - He was gone when I came back.

Lt. Pugh - Was not the complaint duly made to you by Mr. Taylor and Mr. Randolph ?

The king - It was.

Lt. Pugh - Whilst you were away did you depute authority to anyone ?

The king - Yes, to Kabunare (present).

Lt. Pugh (to Kabunare) - Why did you not go after him ?

Te Kabunare - I lived at the other end of the island and when I heard of it, he was gone.

Lt. Pugh - What steps did you take in the matter ?

Te Kabunare - I went down to Lakena but when I got there heard he had gone, so went back.

Lt. Pugh (to the king) - When you came back, what did you do about it ?

The king - I looked for him at his own place among his own people but did not find him.

Lt. Pugh - As the man had committed a crime, as he must have known by his running away, why did you not pursue him and take him wherever he was, Mr. Keyes having been under your written protection ?

The king - The man was a long way off and I wanted to see if the white men would move in the matter.

Lt. Pugh - Then when you found there was only a complaint by the White Residents, you determined to let the matter rest ?

The king - (Note - His answer was vague and impossible to transcribe, but the interpreter indicated that the pith of his meaning was that he had no intention of moving in the matter until he found himself called to account).

Lt. Pugh - This being evidently the case, I shall now proceed to order you what steps you are to take in the matter.

Lt. Pugh - I now call upon you, Ten Timau, king of Abaiang, before these witnesses, to at once capture Tagiao (the murderer of the late St. John Curtis Keyes who was living on Abaiang under your written protection) and to execute him in my presence and this is to be done at once, before he can effect an escape, whether he be at present on this

island, or Marakei, or any other place; should he not be on this island, you are without delay to launch your best war canoes, efficiently manned, and capture him wherever he may be, bringing him here for execution. Are you prepared to do this ?

The king - I am. I will send the canoes at once.

Lt. Pugh - Remember you are not to come back empty-handed and I will give you 2 hours to make a start. Your fault lies in not having punished the murderer at once.

The king - Suppose they hold him on the island ?

Lt. Pugh - The murder was committed here at Abaiang and you let the culprit culpably go, and therefore you must secure him and bring him here for execution. Are you prepared to do so ?

The king - I am.

(Note - The last two entries were then put in writing and signed by all present).

Lt. Pugh - I shall expect you to send after Tagiao within two hours of this time (2.30 p.m.) and will give you a letter to the chiefs of Marakei.

(Note - This letter was to warn the chiefs of Marakei not to oppose the repatriation of Tagiao, save at their peril).

Having then observed the natives launch a war canoe and send it away insufficiently manned, Lieutenant Pugh sent a letter to the king warning him that he deemed the force sent inadequate and that no excuse would be accepted if Tagiao were not repatriated, whereupon the king, within half an hour, despatched a large whaleboat with his chief minister and "the principal men of the place" as a reinforcement.

In the forenoon of the following day, Sub-Lieutenant Rees was sent ashore to take angles for ascertaining the range of the Council House, the war canoe sheds, the 'armoury', the dwelling places of the king and the chiefs, whilst in the afternoon 'combustibles' were prepared for taking on shore to burn the canoe sheds and other buildings should the shells and rockets fail to do so if required in the event of the murderer not being captured. One of the two natives who assisted Tagiao to escape was also surrendered and brought on board the warship and placed in irons.

At 10 p.m. on the following day, the war canoe returned from Marakei, conveying Tagiao and, although he broke away on the beach, he was soon recaptured and sent off to the warship accompanied by the Reverend Taylor, Robert Randolph and another white man. He was then identified and placed in irons in the hold, his accomplice being removed aft and kept under the charge of the Quartermaster, there being only one set of irons in the ship. A message was then sent to the king that he, Lieutenant Pugh, would land with a guard at 8.30 a.m. next morning to deliver the prisoner and witness his execution.

At 7 a.m. on the following morning a field piece was sited upon the beach; at 8.15 the ship was cleared for action and men with small arms assigned to the boats; and at 8.30 Lieutenant Pugh and Sub-Lieutenant Rees landed with a guard of 18 men, taking with them the prisoner, who was then bound to the muzzle of the field piece. Then, after a brief speech of warning against any repetition of the circumstances, the king was called upon by Lieutenant Pugh to "execute justice on the murderer", upon which the latter was "blown from the muzzle of the field piece" by the king. Lieutenant Pugh then shook hands with the king and explained that he had no further cause of complaint against him, and the landing party returned to the ship.

Verily, as Mao-tse-tung later declared, "Power comes out of the barrel of a gun".

It only remains to add as a postscript to this tale that the Commodore addressed the Secretary to Their Lords of the Admiralty in part as follows:-

"Lieutenant Pugh appears to have carried out my orders in both these cases with firmness and judgment and in a manner to impress the natives with a sense of our justice and at the same time in all cases to protect our countrymen when they are ill-used without provocation and I have conveyed to him my full approval of his proceedings".

In turn the Foreign Office addressed the Admiralty stating that the Earl of Derby requested that -

"... you will state to the Lords of the Admiralty that Lieutenant Pugh appears to have carried out the mission with which he was entrusted with judgment and discretion and that in His Lordship's opinion his proceedings should be approved".

Both the Commodore and Lieutenant Pugh were so informed, but one is tempted to wonder whether officers of the Royal Navy, the Lords of the Admiralty, and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs really approved of junior officers making their armament available so that natives might be blown off the muzzles of their field pieces, even if they were murderers, and what the senior Service and those holding high office in those two august institutions, as well as the United Nations, might have to say just over a century later.