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For one particular landing he was advised to have his papers and drawings soldered up in a tin because the chances were about 50-50. This precaution having been taken, all was well. But the same boat was smashed up later in the same day, and one of the occupants was six weeks in hospital with a broken head.

Samoa Still Lives

The proportion of his time which he gave to Samoa is an indication of what he feels about the place. The Samoans, he says, retain their virility, because they still believe in their own traditions and culture. Elsewhere, Polynesians have accepted the white man's ways to a greater or lesser degree. The Samoans have great natural dignity; they still wear the lava-lava, and frown severely on white women who appear in suntop and shorts; and the men still have a marvellous physique. They still go barefoot, and therefore retain their regal walk.

In Tahiti, on the other hand, the native life has completely given way before the introduced cultures of the French and Chinese.

There has been a good deal of change even in the 18 years since he was last there, Gibbings says, and the Tahitians are now a completely trousered race. You don't see a single *pareu* (the garment of red and white printed material which was worn when Gauguin was painting there), except perhaps on a tourist. If the Tahitians wear that kind of material, they make dresses of it, or the suntops and shorts, despised by Samoans as cheaply provocative. The life is charming—a mixture of French and Chinese customs, and foods and wines—but it is no longer Tahitian.

Away From It All

On smaller islands, Gibbings and Miss Empson received the elaborate and generous hospitality of a people who have only a vague idea of what has been happening in the rest of the world: who ask after Queen Victoria, or the Prince of Wales (meaning Edward VII.), or, if they are more up to date, what that Hitler fellow is up to now; who think of the journey from Apia as the greatest and most perilous voyage a man can make, and offer thanks to God when he makes it safely; and for whom the journey from England is only a journey from somewhere beyond their own world (Samoa means "Sacred Centre," just as Cuzco meant "navel" in the Incas' world), and not to be compared in perils with the journey from Apia.

They found that the natives liked to be warned in advance of a visitation, and the more followers you had the better they liked your coming. A man of Gibbings's dignity and magnificence must not even be allowed to carry his own sketchbook; so there were always a handful of carriers and an interpreter, and in addition it was necessary to have an orator, who would make the speeches for his party while Gibbings rested his imposing bulk in comfort after the journey. The natives use poles to carry everything, and small boys have calloused shoulders from carrying loads that Gibbings himself could barely lift. This method of carrying was presumably their own, and not learnt from the Chinese, for the Samoan name for the constellation Orion's Belt is *Amonga*, which means "burden."

The giving and receiving of presents is a most elaborate business for the

traveller. The highest quality of present you can take is tinned corned beef—known as *pisupo*, presumably because of some early association with tinned soup, and the native chief in accepting it will exaggerate its importance enormously, and then make his own gift, referring to it as some mean trifle only fit to be thrown on the ground in front of you. Miss Empson, however, was once given a belt, and her open hand was brushed aside—it had to be put round her waist; and Gibbings was given a hat-band. He had no hat on, so he held out his hand too. But that was not good enough—he had to be crowned with the band.

In small villages, they stayed in the guest houses kept for the purpose of receiving such visitors—usually the best house in the village, and usually festooned for the arrival.

On one island, they had a tremendous reception because they were believed to be members of the family of Wyatt Gill, an early Protestant missionary, and a relative of the English sculptor and engraver Eric Gill. Gibbings had been told about Wyatt Gill's connection with the place (an island in the Cook Group), and he went there with a letter from a missionary on another island. The natives, who held the memory of Wyatt Gill in great veneration, treated Gibbings and Miss Empson as his relatives, and received them with honours befitting deities—they lined up along the way, and afterwards at a feast made a procession past them, every one of them shaking hands with a powerful grip.

Only One Regret

All this life and colour has given Robert Gibbings material for a book that may be more substantial than anything he has done yet, and he has a great quantity of drawings to make engravings from. He seems to have only one regret—that his ignorance of the languages has made it impossible for him to record the subtleties of speech and thought that are the natural material of his English and Irish books. He will be able to put down what people told him, but not the way they told it, because he had to rely on interpreters.

All the same, it sounds like a book Mr. Gibbings's readers will look forward to, a book New Zealanders will watch for, if they are beginning to learn that the Pacific Islands are a part of their own world. And the publishers have seen a few chapters. They consider them "the best yet."

BBC Winter Proms

FOR the first time in 10 years a season of Winter Promenade Concerts, as announced by the BBC, was held for a fortnight during January this year at the Royal Albert Hall, London. The concerts were enthusiastically attended although the season opened on the coldest night in Britain for five years. The BBC Symphony Orchestra was conducted by Basil Cameron and Sir Adrian Boult.

At the first concert there was a performance of Benjamin Britten's "The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra" (Variations on a theme of Purcell). This was particularly appropriate at a time when so many young people, who are beginning to take an interest in the orchestra, were enjoying their Christmas and New Year holidays.

Ralph Vaughan Williams's Piano Concerto, specially arranged for two pianos for the last St. Cecilia's Day Festival, was played by Cyril Smith and Phyllis Sellick, who performed it on that occasion.

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