



FISHING IN HAWAIIAN WATERS.

BY "BUCK WATERHOUSE."

AS fishermen the Hawaiians are unsurpassed. They are highly skilful in a craft that has been handed down from father to son through many generations.

The canoe we stepped into was low and narrow, made out of a "koa" tree, about twenty-five feet long. The inside had been burned out and smoothed down. At its deepest part it measured not more than two feet, and in width it was about eighteen inches. The front of the canoe was slightly bent up, with a piece of wood curved up, called the "ihu," or nose. The bow is covered in for about three feet with a slightly raised piece of wood to prevent the water entering while running through the surf, and under this the fisherman stores his lines, hooks, bait and water bottle or calabash. The hull of the canoe was painted black, the gunwales a bright yellow. To prevent the canoe from upsetting, curved outriggers run out from one side, supported by a narrow float. In the bow of this canoe a paddler took his position, kneeling on his bare knees; another kneeled nearly amidship; the paddles used were broad, strong, and oval in shape. My friend and self were seated on narrow seats, there being four of them in the canoe.

A gentle shove of the paddle, and the canoe glided out upon its mission. Deftly and swiftly the paddlers bent to their work, keeping time in rhythmic motion, and in a little while glided

across the harbor or bay. In the far distance two black specks were seen bobbing up and down upon the surface of the ocean. These specks were two canoes that had preceded us to the fishing ground.

It took all of an hour's hard paddling to reach them. Upon arrival we found each canoe had a single occupant. They had not commenced their work, but had been arranging their lines. We were now about two miles off shore. This particular spot was the haunt of a famous fish called the "ulaula," sometimes called the "royal" fish, so named because it used to be "tabu" to everybody but the king. It would be curious and scientifically useful to discover what effect the revocation of the edict has had upon the fishing banks where this choice denizen of the sea is found. The fishing must aforesaid have been of a very limited nature, for however voracious the appetite of his majesty may have been, and however generously the table of his satellites may have been supplied, the total consumption must have been exceedingly limited, in comparison with the every-day and general fishing of to-day. Yet there is no lack of the royal and toothsome fish.

The fishermen commenced at once to put their lines over the edges of the canoes. At the end of each line was a lava stone about as large as a man's head; this was used as a sinker. The line itself was a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch cord, not unlike

a variety I have seen used in hammock netting. A little above the sinker and for a distance of about six feet, little bamboo canes, in a horizontal position, about a foot and a half in length, ran out from the main line, and from the ends of these canes dangled other pieces of line, to which were attached the baited hooks. The bait used was a portion of squid fish.

Just prior to dropping the stones overboard, the fishermen took their bearings. This they did by a jutting piece of land on either side of them and what looked like the ruins of an old hut wall, situated far up the hillside in front. Being satisfied that their bearings were correct, the stones were slipped into the water. My eyes followed one of them in the transparent water for perhaps thirty feet.

As the lines were running out, the fisherman not only attended to his line, but deftly plied his paddle to prevent the canoe drifting with the ocean current, explaining at the same time that the spot where the fish lay was but a small ledge, and if he missed it the least bit he would get no fish. It took several minutes for the lines to reach bottom, for we were fishing in one hundred and fifty fathoms of water.

On the sinker-stone reaching bottom, the native, by a peculiar jerk, disengaged it, and drew the line about a fathom from the bottom. In about a minute one of the natives said he had a fish and commenced to pull in his line. How long that line was in coming up, and how eagerly I peered into the water! But it had to come nine hundred feet.

At length I could faintly outline something white, which quickly changed to a beautiful pink and gold, and a "royal" fish appeared. In length it measured twenty inches, and was shaped something like a flounder. The colors were more brilliant than a goldfish's. The other canoes were successful also, and we had three fish.

On the second attempt I was asked to hold the line and be initiated in the mystery. Down into the depths went the line, and fathom after fathom was reeled out. The native unloosed the stone. I drew the cord up the required distance, and then waited for what seemed an eternity, but in reality barely a minute, when I felt the tiniest pull. It seemed like the faint pull of a minnow on a bent pin attached to a thread. What a long time it seemed ere that line was drawn to the surface! But at length it came, and at the end a "royal" fish, caught at a depth of one hundred and fifty fathoms. I was now content to watch.

Again the lines disappeared and went through the same performance. This time the fisherman in our canoe informed us he had three fish. Ah! this was exciting. At length his tackle was pulled in, but revealed only two fish; he quickly informed us that the other one would soon float up, and asked us to watch for it. This I did, and in a few minutes it appeared about a canoe's length away.

A curious phenomenon about these fish was that on arrival at the surface their stomachs protruded from their mouths like inflated toy balloons. This was explained by one of the fishermen as a result of hauling the fish from the tremendous pressure of very deep water. The forenoon's fishing totaled a catch of eleven of the "royal" fish, varying in length from fourteen to twenty-six inches.

That same afternoon we had a "luau," or native feast, underneath a group of cocoanut trees. One of the courses comprised specimens of the fish we had caught. They were cooked in Hawaiian style, by being wrapped in "ki" leaves and baked in a layer of stones previously heated. This manner of cooking is said by epicures to be the ideal way of preserving the juices and taste. The "ulaula" was not misnamed when called a "royal" fish. It is a food for the gods.

