

VI.—THE PASSWORD—THE SONG OF ADMISSION

There prevailed among the practitioners of the hula from one end of the group to the other a mutual understanding, amounting almost to a sort of freemasonry, which gave to any member of the guild the right of free entrance at all times to the hall, or halau, where a performance was under way. Admission was conditioned, however, on the utterance of a password at the door. A snatch of song, an oli, denominated *mele kahea*, or *mele wehe puka*, was chanted, which, on being recognized by those within, was answered in the same language of hyperbole, and the door was opened.

The verbal accuracy of any mele kahea that may be adduced is at the present day one of the vexed questions among hula authorities, each hula-master being inclined to maintain that the version given by another is incorrect. This remark applies, though in smaller measure, to the whole body of mele, pule, and oli that makes up the songs and liturgy of the hula as well as to the traditions that guided the maestro, or kumu-hula, in the training of his company. The reasons for these differences of opinion and of text, now that there is to be a written text, are explained by the following facts: The devotees and practitioners of the hula were divided into groups that were separated from one another by wide intervals of sea and land. They belonged quite likely to more than one cult, for indeed there were many gods and *au-makua* to whom they sacrificed and offered prayers. The passwords adopted by one generation or by the group of practitioners on one island might suffer verbal changes in transmission to a later generation or to a remote island.

Again, it should be remembered that the entire body of material forming the repertory of the hula—pule, mele, and oli—was intrusted to the keeping of the memory, without the aid of letters or, so far as known, of any mnemonic device; and the human mind, even under the most athletic discipline, is at best an imperfect conservator of literary form. The result was what might be expected: as the imagination and emotions of the minstrel warmed under the inspiration of his trust, glosses and amendments crept in. These, however, caused but slight variations in the text. The substance remains substantially the same.

After carefully weighing the matter, the author can not avoid the conclusion that jealousy had much to do with the slight differences now manifest, that one version is as authoritative as another, and

that it would be well for each kumu-hula to have kept in mind the wise adage that shines among the sayings of his nation: *Aohe pau ka ike i kau halau* ^a—"Think not that all of wisdom resides in your halau."^b

Mele Kahea

Ll'u-lh'u aloha ia'u,
Ka uka o Koholá-lele,
Ka nahele mauka o Ka-papala ° la.
Komo, e komo aku hoi au maloko.
5 Mai ho'ohewahewa mai oe ia'u; oau no ia,
Ke ka-nae-nae a ka mea hele,
He leo, e-e,
A he leo wale no, e-e!
Eia ka pu'u nui owaho nei la,
10 He ua, he ino, he anu, he ko'e-ko'e.
E ku'u aloha, e,
Maloko aku au.

[Translation]

Password

Long, long have I tarried with love
In the uplands of Koholá-lele,
The wildwood above Ka-papala.
To enter, permit me to enter, I pray;
5 Refuse me not recognition; I am he,
A traveler offering mead of praise,
Just a voice,
Only a human voice.
Oh, what I suffer out here,
10 Rain, storm, cold, and wet.
O sweetheart of mine,
Let me come in to you.

Hear now the answer chanted by voices from within:

Mele Komo

Aloha 'na hale o makou i maka-maka ole,
Ke alanui hele mauka o Pu'u-kahea la, e-e!
Ka-he-a!
E Kahea aku ka pono e komo mai oe iloko nei.
Eia ka pu'u nui o waho nei, he anu.

^aSophocles (*Antigone*, 705) had said the same thing: μη νυν ἐν ἤθεος μῦθον εἰς αὐτὰ φέρει, ὡς φησὶ σὺ, κοῦδὲν ἄλλο, τοῦτ' ἄρθῶς ἔχειν—"Don't get this idea fixed in your head, that what you say, and nothing else, is right."

^b*Halau*. As previously explained, in this connection *halau* has a meaning similar to our word "school," or "academy," a place where some art was taught, as wrestling, boxing, or the hula.

^c*Ka-papala*. A verdant region on the southeastern flank of Mauna-Loa.

[Translation]

Song of Welcome

What love to our cottage-homes, now vacant,
As one climbs the mount of Entreaty!
We call,
We voice the welcome, invite you to enter.
The hill of Affliction out there is the cold.

Another fragment that was sometimes used as a password is the following bit of song taken from the story of Hiiaka, sister of Pele. She is journeying with the beautiful Hopoe to fetch prince Lohiau to the court of Pele. They have come by a steep and narrow path to the brink of the Wai-lua river, Kauai, at this point spanned by a single plank. But the bridge is gone, removed by an ill-tempered naiad (witch) said to have come from Kahiki, whose name, Wai-lua, is the same as that of the stream. Hiiaka calls out, demanding that the plank be restored to its place. Wai-lua does not recognize the deity in Hiiaka and, sullen, makes no response. At this the goddess puts forth her strength, and Wai-lua, stripped of her power and reduced to her true station, that of a *mo'o*, a reptile, seeks refuge in the caverns beneath the river. Hiiaka betters the condition of the crossing by sowing it with stepping stones. The stones remain in evidence to this day.

Mele Kahea

Kunihi ka mauna i ka la'i e,
O Wai-ale-ale^a la i Wai-lua,
Huki a'e la i ka lani
Ka papa au-wai o ka Wai-kini;
5 Alai ia a'e la e Nou-nou,
Nalo ka Ipu-ha'a,
Ka laula mauka o Kapa'a, e!
Mai pa'a i ka leo!
He ole ka hea mai, e!

[Translation]

Password—Song

Steep stands the mountain in calm,
Profile of Wai-ale-ale at Wai-lua.
Gone the stream-spanning plank of Wai-kini,
Filched away by Nou-nou;
5 Shut off the view of the hill Ipu-ha'a,
And the upland expanse of Ka-pa'a.
Give voice and make answer.
Dead silence—no voice in reply.

In later, in historic times, this visitor, whom we have kept long waiting at the door, might have voiced his appeal in the passionate words of this comparatively modern song:

^a *Wai-ale-ale* (Leaping-water). The central mountain-mass of Kauai.

Mele Kahea^c

Ka uka holo-kia ahi-manu o La'a,^b
I po-ele i ka uahi, noe ka nahele,
Nohe-nohea i ka makani lubau-pua.
He pua oni ke kanaka—
5 He mea laha ole ia oe.
Mai kaula e hea nei;
E hea i ke kanaka e komo maloko,
E hanai ai a hewa^c ka wa'ha.
Eia no ka uku la, o ka wa'a.^d

[Translation]

Password—Song

In the uplands, the darting flame-bird of La'a,
While smoke and mist blur the woodland,
Is keen for the breath of frost-bitten flowers.
A fickle flower is man—
5 A trick this not native to you.
Come thou with her who is calling to thee;
A call to the man to come in
And eat till the mouth is awry.
Lo, this the reward—the canoe.

The answer to this appeal for admission was in these words:

Mele Komo

E hea i ke kanaka e komo maloko,
E hanai ai a hewa waha;
Eia no ka uku la, o ka leo,
A he leo wale no, e!

[Translation]

Welcoming-Song

Call to the man to come in,
And eat till the mouth is estopt;
And this the reward, the voice,
Simply the voice.

The cantillation of the *mele komo*, in answer to the visitor's petition, meant not only the opening to him of the halau door, but also his welcome to the life of the halau as a heart-guest of honor, trebly welcome as the bringer of fresh tidings from the outside world.

^c This utterance of passion is said to have been the composition of the Princess Kamamalu, as an address to Prince William Lunaillo, to whom she was at one time affianced and would have married, but that King Lihohho (Kamehameha IV) would not allow the marriage. Thereby hangs a tragedy.

^b *La'a*. The region in Hawaii now known as Oia'a was originally called La'a. The particle *o* has become fused with the word.

^c *Hewa ka waha*. This expression, here tortured into "(till) the mouth awry," is difficult of translation. A skilled Hawaiian scholar suggests it may mean to change one from an enemy to a friend by stopping his mouth with food.

^d *Wa'a*. Literally a canoe. This is a euphemism for the human body, a gift often too freely granted. It will be noted that in the answering *mele komo*, the song of admission, the reward promised is more modestly measured—"Simply the voice."