

In order to prevent any dispute in the succession to the throne, it was formerly deemed necessary that the king should take all the women of the highest rank as his wives, and all the children born of them were declared and considered as his heirs.

The present king is said to be the natural son of Kamehameha I, and became, from political causes, heir to the throne.

After crossing the causeway we reached a small island: on this was a grass-house of moderate dimensions, surrounded by hibiscus trees, which grow quite low, and made a bower almost impervious to the sun's rays. At the entrance of the house I was met by his majesty, dressed in a roundabout of blue cloth, and white pantaloons. He led the way into the bower, in the centre of which his wife was lying in a clean white hammock, suspended between the trees. Every thing about her was pleasant-looking, betokening care and attention to her comfort, and a degree of refinement I little expected to see. Although unwell, she showed many marks of beauty, and I was much struck with her appearance.

The king told me these were their private apartments, where they could remain undisturbed and free from intrusion. They passed most of their time together, and he pointed out a small hut of ti-leaves that he had constructed for her, in which she had been lying on new-mown grass. The king pointed out the improvements he had in contemplation, but complained that he had not money to carry them on. Although his income is very considerable, in tapas and native produce, and would have constituted great wealth in former times, yet, from the depreciation in the value of these articles, it is now of little value. He has so many hangers-on, that it takes a large amount to supply, maintain, and clothe them, even in the ordinary garments of the island. These circumstances leave the king quite as poor as any of his subjects.

The little domestic scene I had witnessed gave me great pleasure, the more so from being quite unexpected; and I found afterwards that very few are ever admitted to this sanctum sanctorum. I take pleasure in mentioning it, as I had not before given his majesty credit for the domestic virtues, which I am now satisfied he possesses to a great degree, both from the tenor of his conversation and the pleasing picture he exhibited in the last interview I had with him.

His wife is much fairer than the natives usually, and she has not so coarse and disproportionate a figure as seems characteristic of the females of distinction in these islands. Her features, however, were decidedly of the native character. The tone of voice was pleasing and ladylike.