FOUR ARAWAK INDIAN SONGS

BY

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The words of the following four songs were communicated to us in the year 1911 by our friend Sasamali, otherwise known as Jan, of the Arawak family Kaluafudi, living at a place called Matta, between the Para and Saramacca rivers in Dutch Guiana.

In three of these songs the subject is Love or Drink, themes which have inspired song writers and poets of all nations from the earliest times. Simple and artless, the verses are in perfect keeping with the mild-mannered Arawaks. Thus while the Carib dreams of the Maroni, the fountainhead of wonder and mystery, the gentle Arawak turns his gaze westward toward the Corentyn and sings of the joy of meeting his kin.

The fourth song deals with a rather odd subject — the departure of Indians to England to escape man-eaters. Just why a Surinam Arawak should choose England instead of Holland as a haven of refuge is not quite clear until we remember that the family Kaluafona, of which any individual male member is known as a Kaluafudi, is also found in the neighboring colony of British Guiana¹). It is thus entirely probable that the song originated there. The allusion to cannibals, too, is rather startling and would appear to give an air of antiquity to the verses. We recall that Sir Walter Raleigh on the occasion of his visit to Guiana had taken some Indians back with him to England, and that two of them attended him during his imprisonment in The Tower. Nevertheless, to associate