

15. It is difficult to understand why Great Britain should encourage foreign nations to gain a footing in the Pacific, and yet refuse this privilege to her own offspring; and it is still more difficult to understand why, in the case of those islands which are actually British possessions, she should allow, as she has done, foreign nations to take possession of them, yet refuse to permit her own children to do so.

16. By allowing the British colonies in these seas to occupy such of the islands in the Pacific as they are willing to undertake the administration and cost of, the Empire would spread in the most natural and effectual way at no cost whatever to the mother country. British commerce would rapidly extend and be fostered under the most favourable conditions, whilst the inhabitants of any colony that willingly assumed responsibilities of this kind would have their energies developed, and have a field of enterprise and statesmanship opened to them which would do much to form the character of a youthful nation, and to raise up a people which would reflect credit upon the great country from which they have sprung. It is probable that the British race cannot permanently be shut out from a great destiny in the Pacific and Eastern countries; that it must become the ruling power in those parts of the world; and that the interest and welfare of the countries I allude to, and of many millions of people in territories lying to the north and west of the Pacific, are involved in this question. At a time when British statesmen admit that British commerce is declining, and they are proposing to restore it by the doubtful plan of establishing a great commerce with Africa, it is difficult to understand why they should deliberately cast away a lucrative commerce, which would rapidly grow, and which here lies ready to their hand.

17. Experience appears to show that it is impossible for an Empire to neglect the duties it owes to the races on its frontier, without entailing on itself serious evils, which, penetrating beyond its mere frontier, spread into the population of its outlying possessions.

18. Thus, the habits and disorders which are allowed to grow in the Pacific Islands call into existence a class of men who, believing that large fortunes may be realized from speculative purchases of lands from uncivilized races, engage in this pursuit, some of whom are careless by what means or arts they acquire a specious title to tracts of lands. The proceedings of such persons re-act upon the inhabitants of British territories where there are mixed populations, who are encouraged by the numbers who engage in the pursuit and by the success of some. Hence great embarrassments are often created, and the most vital and important interests of the entire community are sacrificed to promote the undue acquisition of wealth by a few persons.

19. The coloured labour traffic, again, calls into existence a lawless set of reckless men, whose acts exercise a pernicious influence, and create a lawless sentiment, more wide-spread than would at first be thought. A bad feeling arises in the minds of many Europeans towards native races, whilst these people finding themselves despised—perhaps looked down upon with contempt—in their turn conceive a distrust of, perhaps a dislike to, the European race. From such a mutual feeling of dislike and distrust, disasters are too likely to arise.

20. A striking instance of this feeling of lawlessness to which I have adverted, appeared in a case recently brought before the Court at Auckland, regarding a shocking murder of one British subject by another on the Island of Bouteritari, on the 7th October last. Documents appended give details of the transaction; and of the failure, for the present at least, of any constituted authority to hold the offender responsible for his offence. See A.—3, 1879.

21. I beg to be permitted to add the following further remarks: It appears that Mr. F. Cornwall, at the time he was Acting-Consul, was extensively engaged in a coloured-labour traffic, importing such labourers as were specially engaged for him. The Acting-Consul was also agent for a firm at Auckland.

22. I recommend that a stop should be put to such a system, and that no person holding permanently or temporarily the position of Consul or Acting-Consul should be allowed to be in any way, directly or indirectly, connected with such a traffic. I think it becomes a great nation rigidly to enforce the rule I recommend for adoption, even if some additional charge is thereby entailed on it.

23. With regard to Mr. Cornwall being the agent of an Auckland firm, I think, looking to the distance of Samoa from New Zealand, they might well have thought that the fact of their agent being Acting-Consul was a sufficient guarantee for their being able to place reliance on the propriety of his proceedings.

24. As already stated, no list of labourers was recorded in the Consulate at Samoa; and the list given by Mr. Cornwall, the Acting-Consul at Lata, was made out some time after their arrival there and was imperfect, and Mr. Moors (Mr. Cornwall's manager) had either kept no account of the deaths of the labourers, or purposely misinformed Mr. Maudslay, the Deputy Commissioner, on the subject.

25. On this point, I would recommend that steps should be taken forthwith to prevent the possible recurrence of such a state of things in future.

26. I also concur in the judicious suggestion made by Mr. Maudslay that, if possible, some power should be given, under the Pacific Islanders Protection Act, to establish regulations for the proper treatment of coloured labourers when employed on the estates of British subjects.

Wellington, 3rd February, 1879.

G. GREY.

No. 2.

The SECRETARY of STATE for the Colonies to His Excellency the GOVERNOR.

MY LORD,—

Downing Street, 18th October, 1878.

I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship a copy of a despatch, with its enclosures, addressed by the Acting Deputy Commissioner in Samoa to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, reporting the result of an inquiry which he had instituted into certain alleged cruelties to Polynesian labourers on the estate of an English proprietor in the Navigators Islands.