

This Government is of opinion that the time has now arrived for reviving the subject of the annexation of New Guinea; understanding by this not merely the extending of British sovereignty over such portion of it as is not claimed by the Government of the Netherlands, but the including of such within the territorial jurisdiction of Queensland.

With regard to the general question of annexation, I may simply remark that the statement of the considerations in favour of it, as summed up in the Earl of Carnarvon's despatch to Sir H. Robinson, dated 8th December, 1875, still hold good, and with even greater force than at that period, viz.—“(1.) That the possession of New Guinea and adjacent islands would be of value to the Empire, and conduce specially to the peace and safety of Australia, the development of Australian trade, and the prevention and punishment of crime throughout the Pacific. (2.) That the establishment of a Foreign Power in the neighbourhood of Australia would be injurious to British, and more particularly to Australian interests.”

On the first of these considerations no stricture was made by the Imperial Government; and against the second nothing was advanced except an expression of confidence—probably quite justified at the time—in the quiescence of other Powers, so far as new attempts at colonization were concerned. I do not think, however, that such confidence is any longer justifiable. Without entering into particulars, I may take for granted that your Excellency is fully cognizant of various recent events which give evidence of the fact that the Pacific region generally is now attracting the attention of more than one civilized Power, with the view to the establishment of centres of influence as well as sources of profit; and I may state that, having regard to the circumstances referred to, and especially to the accompanying letter from the Agent-General, covering a communication from the Honorary Secretary of the Colonial Institute, regarding a recent article in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* (a translation of which is attached), I am myself of opinion that the probability of the colonization of New Guinea, or, at all events, the formal occupation of some favourable point on the island, by some other Power than Great Britain, is very largely increased.

Independent of the fact that the occupation of some portion of the coast of New Guinea can now with little difficulty be undertaken by the Government of Queensland, I would further observe, having still reference to the previous correspondence on the subject, that should it be decided to annex New Guinea to any one of the Australasian Colonies, the same arguments, geographical and otherwise, which weighed with the Imperial Government in favour of the annexation of the above-mentioned islands to this colony in particular, are equally cogent toward determining the selection of Queensland as the colony under whose jurisdiction New Guinea should be placed.

Further, such changes, having relation to this subject, as have arisen since the period of the previous correspondence are of a nature to furnish fresh grounds of expediency for the annexation of New Guinea to Queensland, inasmuch as they prove how rapidly the activity of the colony is developing in that direction, and show also the closer relationship, through increased facilities of communication, existing between Queensland and New Guinea. Among these I may enumerate,—(1.) The extension of telegraphic communication from Cooktown to Thursday Island. (2.) The establishment of the Torres Straits mail service by the Government of Queensland. (3.) The establishment of a steam mail service between Thursday Island and Normanton. (4.) The appointment of Thursday Island as a station for one of the gun-boats now being ordered by the Queensland Government. And to these I would add the establishment by the Imperial Government of a naval coaling depôt in the vicinity of Thursday Island—a circumstance that, besides having an evident bearing upon the general question of the possession of the large island which in the hands of another civilized Power would divide with Great Britain the command of these waters, points also to the nearest territorial jurisdiction, viz., that of Queensland as the natural source of responsibility for the safety and order of all settlements in Torres Straits.

As one of the first questions likely to arise in connection with this subject, should Her Majesty's Government be disposed to give it full consideration, is that of the initial point at which to commence settlement, I would request your attention to the accompanying extract from the report of Captain Pennefather, of the Queensland Government schooner “Pearl,” from which it will be seen that a splendid harbour exists between Yule Island and the mainland of New Guinea. This place the Queensland Government, having regard to its extraordinary fertility, as well as safety of anchorage, would be disposed to make the headquarters of colonization; and, in the event of the Imperial Government deciding upon the annexation of New Guinea to Queensland, this Government would also be prepared to recommend Parliament to grant the necessary appropriation for defraying the cost of settlement, and maintaining, if necessary, an armed force for the defence of the settlers—in this way meeting the objection which, more than any other, seems to have determined Her Majesty's Government against taking action in the matter at the period of the previous correspondence.

I have, &c.

THOMAS McILWRAITH.

His Excellency Sir A. E. Kennedy, G.C.M.G. C.B. Toowoomba.

In re ANNEXATION of NEW GUINEA by GERMAN GOVERNMENT.

Queensland Government Office,

SIR,—

1, Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, London, S.W., December 15, 1882.

I have the honour to transmit enclosed, at the request of the Honorary Secretary of the Royal Colonial Institute, a copy of a letter, together with a newspaper of the 27th November last, about annexation of the Island of New Guinea by the German Government.

I have &c.

THOS. ARCHER,
Agent-General.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Brisbane.