

in length, on which missionary and trading establishments have within the last few years been formed, and are now being rapidly pressed forward. Duke of York's Island, situated between the two larger ones, is the seat of a German factory, and large tracts of land are said to have been acquired by Europeans in both islands. The whole of the trading interests in these groups have lately been bought up by the German company above referred to.

26. To the east and south of this group lie the Solomon Islands, stretching over a length of some 600 miles. They consist of eight or ten large islands, several of which exceed 100 miles in length, and very many smaller ones. They are very mountainous and very fertile. From them are recruited a very large proportion of the labourers imported into Queensland and Fiji. They are inhabited by innumerable small tribes, all at deadly enmity with each other, and under the control of no hereditary or powerful chiefs.

27. The Santa Cruz Islands, seven or eight in number, not including smaller ones, are inhabited by a fierce and treacherous race.

28. Not far distant from these lie the Banks Islands, none of which are of great size, but among which are situated the head-quarters of the Melanesian Mission.

29. To the south of these again come the New Hebrides, some of which are christianized, but where Christianity has made slow progress. The native population, a large portion of which is employed in Queensland and Fiji, is rapidly diminishing, and the reports of Captain Bridge show that, especially in the island of Sandwich (or Vaté), there is a considerable resident population of Europeans.

30. In all these groups, from the Solomons to the New Hebrides, the population is Melanesian. Where they have not come under the influence of Christianity they are cannibals, and this revolting institution is intimately mixed up with their superstitions and ceremonies.

31. They are also usually at war with their near neighbours, which is one of the most fertile causes of the rapid depopulation of these islands. From the configuration of these volcanic islands the punishment of outrages committed by their inhabitants is a most difficult and dangerous service, and one the difficulty of which the unlimited introduction of arms of precision is likely to increase.

32. In this brief sketch nothing has been said of the vast island of New Guinea.

33. Its inhabitants are principally Papuans, and so far a distinct race from the islanders already mentioned; but on the sea-coast the variety in shades of colour, and difference of features, show that intercommunication between them and their fairer neighbours must have been going on for ages.

34. They are certainly a long way in advance of the Melanesians, and may be said to possess many germs of civilization, for they build good houses, live in towns the population of which number often over two and three thousand souls, fully appreciating beauty, as can be seen by the neat way in which their compounds or gardens are laid out with flowers; and have a system of barter which enables them to have a regular division of labour: thus a portion of a village or town will be entirely occupied by fishermen, who exchange their fish for vegetables or other commodities, whilst another section is occupied by carpenters whose time is devoted to canoe-making, and who by this means gain a livelihood.

35. Like the Melanesians they have no hereditary chiefs, the towns being subdivided and presided over by "headmen" possessing great influence. As a rule, they are a law-abiding peaceable race, and could easily be kept in order by any official with power to insure justice being done there.

36. Mr. Henry M. Chester (Resident Magistrate at Thursday Island), in a report to the Colonial Secretary of Queensland, dated 30th August, 1878, writes: "Our recent cruise will have dispelled the prevailing idea that New Guinea is a country solely inhabited by savage races with whom it is impossible to hold intercourse, and that annexation is an easy matter. These people cannot be dispossessed of their country as easily as the aborigines of Australia. They have vested interests and rights that cannot be disregarded: but I am sanguine that the day is not far distant when this land will be opened up to the markets of Manchester and Sheffield."

37. These remarks are worthy of note, coming as they do from an official of experience, specially sent to the country to report on it, and who was lately delegated by the Queensland Government to take formal possession of New Guinea on behalf of that colony.

WORKING OF THE ORDER IN COUNCIL.

38. On the proclamation of the Order in Council, Deputy Commissioners for the Navigators and Friendly groups were at once appointed by direction of the Secretary of State, but the High Commissioner was instructed to appoint no other resident or salaried deputies in other parts of the Pacific. To meet special exigencies, however, officers in command of Her Majesty's ships and others have been from time to time furnished with the powers of a Deputy Commissioner. In this manner, the south coast of New Guinea was visited by Captain Digby, H.M.S. "Sappho," in 1878; the Marshall, Ellice, and Caroline Islands in 1880 by Captain Maxwell, H.M.S. "Emerald;" the Solomon Islands by Captain Dale, H.M.S. "Diamond;" and the New Hebrides by Captain Bridge, H.M.S. "Espiegle," in 1882, who has also during the present year visited the Line and Caroline Islands. The first Deputy Commissioner appointed, after the nomination of those for Samoa and Tonga, was Mr. Chester, the Police Magistrate at Thursday Island, for whom the Queensland Government in 1878 solicited an appointment as Deputy Commissioner for the Darnley and Murray Islands. About a year afterwards, however, the Commission, which had been in the first instance urgently requested by the Queensland authorities, was returned, with an intimation that an officer of the Queensland Government could not with propriety hold an appointment emanating from any other source. The islands in question, as well as all others situated in Torres Straits between New Guinea and Queensland, were shortly afterwards annexed to that colony.

39. In 1878, the Island of Rotumah was, as it had been for some time previously, the seat of religious wars between the Roman Catholic and Protestant sections of the population, which there