

IV.—*Relations with Natives.*

168. It was originally intended that the High Commissioner should have, in that capacity, exclusive control over the relations with the natives within the Western Pacific, but departmental considerations suggested that these functions should be discharged by him in the capacity of Consul-General. This division of duties is not practically convenient, and it is one extremely difficult to observe in detail. It may appear easy enough to say that the High Commissioner is to deal with all matters affecting British subjects, and the Consul-General with all matters affecting native interests. But the two are, very often, inextricably interwoven. We strongly recommend, therefore, that the High Commissioner should communicate with one department only, whether that be the Colonial or the Foreign Office. If this cannot be accomplished, it will at least be requisite that all Deputy Commissioners shall be considered *ex officio* Vice-Consuls. It is difficult for the High Commissioner—it would be impossible for the Deputy Commissioners—always to observe the fine line which separates the work of the two departments. Although the functions of a Deputy Commissioner may primarily relate to British subjects alone, he is certain, if permanently resident in any island (and especially if the recommendations contained in this report are carried into effect), to be engaged in continual communication with the natives. A British official on the spot is certain to give his assistance to any British subject involved in trouble with the natives, and will be equally regarded both by natives and by white men as a representative of the English Government, whether his official title be that of Deputy Commissioner or Vice-Consul, and his proper duties judicial or diplomatic.

169. The general relations with the natives may be said to consist in seeing that they are not unfairly treated, and on the other hand in striving to induce the natives themselves to prevent theft or aggression, and to punish these or more serious offences, if they occur.

170. Finally, if necessary, the Deputy Commissioner should declare his inability to obtain redress, and hand over the case to the naval authorities, to be dealt with by an "act of war."

171. The sale of land to white men is now of frequent occurrence in many, if not most, of the Pacific groups, and we recommend that it should be required, so far as British subjects are concerned, that all such transactions should be registered by a Deputy Commissioner, not as any proof of the validity of the title, but as a record that a transaction of some sort had really taken place, and to prevent any subsequent fraudulent tampering with the deeds themselves.

172. Much has been said about the trade in arms carried on through the islands, and Her Majesty's Government has strongly urged its absolute prohibition. We doubt whether it would be possible effectually to check the trade in arms without the co-operation of other European Powers, and in these circumstances we hesitate to recommend its suppression. We may at the same time point out that, whatever the indisposition of the Australian Colonies to co-operate, the trade might, as far as British vessels are concerned, be very easily put an end to by making it penal within the jurisdiction of the High Commission to carry arms in excess of the number required for the defence of the ship and crew. It has been suggested by the Secretary of State that regulations of a prohibitory character might be issued by the High Commissioner: but to render such regulations effective would require the sanction of far higher penalties than the very moderate fines which he can impose. Nothing short of confiscation of the arms, if not of the vessel carrying them, would suffice to prevent so lucrative a traffic, and such a penalty could only be imposed by an additional Act of Parliament or Order in Council.

173. Much has also been said with regard to the more frequent occurrence of massacres committed by natives, and the difficulty which attends their satisfactory punishment.

174. Murders of white men by natives in the Pacific are in themselves no novelty. That they have frequently, very frequently, been perpetrated, and that there have always been islands at which it was impossible to land without incurring the most imminent hazard, may be seen by a reference to any volume of voyages in the Pacific, published since the discovery of these seas; and the unrecorded instances of similar events must be yet more numerous. They are due in themselves, in almost every case, to one of three exciting causes—cupidity—revenge, or fear.

175. Cupidity is strong in the ordinary savage, and he will gratify his desire for acquisition if he sees the means of doing so without immediate risk to himself.

176. The desire of revenge, not on the individual offender but on any member of his tribe or race, is perhaps the commonest cause of outrages committed by natives, and has been so since the days of their earliest intercourse with whites. The long account of mutual wrongs began at least as far back as the days of Quiros, who records in his voyage that he "caught two natives in one canoe and took them on board the ship, which, from their signs, occasioned in their fellows a great animosity." During the three hundred years which have since elapsed how often has this story been repeated, and with the same result!

177. Fear of the unknown influences, and possibly magical powers, of white men undoubtedly has in many cases led to their murder, and probably is largely felt on those islands where no stranger is allowed to land.

178. But the question now before us is not why murders are committed, but why they have become of more frequent occurrence than was the case in times past.

179. We consider the increased number of murders committed in the Western Pacific to be due chiefly to four causes.

- (1.) There is now a far greater frequency of intercourse between whites and natives than was formerly the case, and the opportunities for murder, and temptations to commit it, are consequently multiplied in the same ratio. We do not know that the actual percentage of murders among those residing or voyaging in the Western Pacific has materially increased.
- (2.) Owing to this greater frequency of intercourse, the natives have lost much of the awe in which whites were formerly held by them.
- (3.) The possession of firearms and ammunition by the natives has given them a confidence and