

Harbour on the 1st June, the like number at Port Sandwich on the 5th June. Certainly they stop there, but that is all they do. The pretence of operations against the natives, necessitated by outrages on French citizens, has never been carried into action. There was no ground for this pretence then; there has been no ground given by the natives since. The military posts have simply been guards for the trading stores of the New Hebrides Company, and evidences of the intention of French occupation *de jure* as well as *de facto*. Monsieur Ortus, it may be remarked, has been promoted to the rank of Colonel. The two posts are now reduced to fifty men each, who protect the transactions of the New Hebrides Company, the interests of a dozen French settlers and traders, and a dozen French copra-makers of the "beachcomber" stamp who are scattered about the islands—that is, there are two soldiers for each civilian. British taxpayers would object to such an arrangement; the soldiers themselves do not like it. Life, says the young lieutenant who is in command at Havannah Harbour, is *triste* here, and the men have all suffered terribly from fever. The extra fatigue duty in making their houses of wattle and lime, and thatched roofs, buildings cool and comfortable and adapted to the climate, has, perhaps, had its effect. But every one gets the fever in the rainy season here, if not in the present dry winter months. Even the seamen on Her Majesty's ship "Raven," who practically, it may be said, are never ashore, have suffered severely. A third of the crew has been down with sickness at one time. In this connection it may be noticed as an extraordinary fact that the sailors who were fever-stricken were nearly all members of the Good Templar organization. It is narrated in "Cook's Voyages" that when the crew of the "Endeavour" was attacked with fever at Batavia, the surgeon and others dying, "it was remarkable that every individual had been ill excepting the sailmaker, who was an old man between seventy and eighty years of age, and who was drunk every day during the residence of our people in Batavia." French soldiers are temperate enough—they have few opportunities to be otherwise; but the fever in the New Hebrides affects them worse than it does many an old "beachcomber," whose only god is square gin.

Havannah Harbour has for many years been the most important calling-place for vessels trading in the Western Pacific. Ships from Queensland and Fiji made this their rendezvous. Landlocked as it is by protecting islands, a better harbour cannot be found in the South Seas. Until a year or two back hardly any flag was seen here but that of England. The interests of England were prominent on shore. There were other *bonâ fide* British settlers like Captain Macleod, who cleared and cultivated the land. Even at present the only plantation of importance, after that of the French company at Port Vila, is owned by Mrs. Glissan, an English lady, widow of the gentleman who made a magnificent and fertile property out of primal jungle. The coffee grown at Sivaree is some of the best in the world. Besides the two Presbyterian missionaries settled on Vaté, there is one on the adjacent island of Muna, and another at Tongoa within three hours' sail. So English interests even now are quite equal to those of the French. Great Britain can here claim the right of discovery, of occupation, and of usage, while the French claims are only of recent date, and these the partly fictitious ones of the New Hebrides Company. Irrespective of any other aspect of the question, to allow the French to retain possession of Havannah Harbour would be to give them one of the best ports in the Pacific, unsurpassed as a coaling-station. There is no coal stored there as yet. Her Majesty's ships now go to Noumea to coal. In New Caledonia large supplies have been accumulated by the authorities in readiness for war. Havannah Harbour in this respect could be made equally important, and English interests could easily have been maintained here, and the whole group gradually absorbed, if any encouragement or protection had been given to the early settlers, instead of letting them be officially considered as legally pariahs outside all law and nationality. There is no doubt that many of the "beachcomber" type would be pleased to be so considered and left alone. But others wanted some security for their properties, some legal recognition of their rights as British citizens, which they were unable to obtain from Australia or Fiji. Sir Arthur Gordon, when Governor of Fiji, once it is said proposed to appoint Mr. Hugh Romilly, C.M.G., as Assistant Commissioner at Havannah Harbour. But he was sent to study savage life in the Solomon Islands. The appointment here of such an Assistant Commissioner, under the Governor of Fiji, would even now be of great benefit as a practical evidence of English interests in the New Hebrides. Such an official would examine the *bonâ fides* of the titles to land claimed by British subjects. If in the old days no Englishman could obtain any legal recognition of his claim to any property here, the system lately inaugurated is perhaps worse. Documents presumed to be land-titles can be sent to Fiji and registered in the office of the High Commissioner for Western Polynesia on payment of a small fee. This registration is only legally considered to be an acknowledgment of the applicant's claim, but by many it is held to be a good title, and certain British subjects resident in Noumea have lately been buying land from the natives, have had the titles registered in Fiji, and have then sold to the French company, to whom the natives would not have given their lands. *Bonâ fide* settlers here would receive protection and assistance from a Deputy Commissioner, but he would discourage as much as possible all land speculations by Englishmen resident in Noumea and New Caledonia.

From Havannah Harbour I cruised round the group. Nowhere are there any "French interests" to be seen except those of copra-makers—men who drift from island to island, leading a vagabond, careless life, victims to fever or square gin, whose career is generally ended by a bloody death. There are only two *bonâ fide* settlers north of Vaté. One is Mr. George de Latour, an English gentleman who has many acres of maize on his property at Aoré, a small island south of Espiritu Santo, the Austral Land of the Holy Spirit named by Quiros, the first white navigator in these seas. But of the copra-makers more than half are English or Scandinavians. The English flag floats over most of the ships we meet: labour vessels recruiting from Queensland or Fiji. And on every beach where we land there is some one to speak English, of a "pigeon" kind certainly, but still English. The French or Bourbonnais copra-makers have to learn this dialect to communicate with the natives. At Port Sandwich, on the south-west side of the Island of Mallicolo,