

should not have been maintained, but that the Tongan Government should have first asked if it were lawful before importing these people into Tonga. I have intimated to them that they are perfectly free to go to any church they please, or stay away as they may choose.

On the 23rd a reply came to my letter above referred to, a copy of which, and my acknowledgment, I enclose.

I have ascertained that an agreement exists under which these people were engaged for one year, countersigned by Mr. Exham as British Resident; but this information was not supplied by the Government, from whom I have heard nothing further.

I have, &c.,

R. BECKWITH LEEFE, Vice-Consul.

His Excellency Sir John B. Thurston, K.C.M.G., Consul-General Western Pacific.

Vice-Consul LEEFE to the SECRETARY, Tongan Government.

SIR,—

16th October, 1889.

I have the honour to inform you that it has come to my knowledge that on the last voyage of the steamship "Richmond" a considerable number of natives of the Hervey Group, over which the British flag was some time ago hoisted, were brought to work as labourers for the Tongan Government.

It is not the policy of the British Government to permit its aboriginal subjects in the South Pacific to leave their homes under engagement to work in a foreign country, or, still more, without such engagement, and I think it not improbable that the master of the "Richmond" may be ordered to return these people to their homes at the expense of the ship.

Meanwhile these people, being British subjects, are, as unsophisticated natives, peculiarly and especially under the protection of Her Majesty's Consular Officer in Tonga, and as such I must request you to forward to me a copy of the engagement under which the men were procured, and to state whether they were recruited with the sanction of the resident British official at Rarotonga.

I must also, in pursuance of the last paragraph, request that these men have free access to the consulate, and that I may be enabled at any time to inspect them and their houses to ascertain that they are properly treated, housed, and fed. It is also as well to remind you that no unauthorised punishments can be inflicted on these people, such, for instance, as the use of the lash, which Tongan subordinate officials not infrequently use.

A report has also reached me that these men attended last Sunday the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and that they were told subsequently that they must in future attend the Free Church. I cannot say whether this report has any foundation in fact; but if it has, as I think highly probable, it is but kindly caution to remind you that there must be no such interference, and that these men are as free to choose what (if any) place of worship they will attend as any, even the highest, of Her Majesty's subjects.

R. BECKWITH LEEFE, Vice-Consul.

I must request that you will acknowledge the receipt of this despatch at your earliest convenience.

The SECRETARY, Tongan Government, to Vice-Consul LEEFE.

SIR,—

22nd October, 1889.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 17,189, and in reply to say that, as I deem the subject of your letter of importance to the Tongan Government, I shall refer the same to the next meeting of His Majesty's Cabinet. But, for the information of His Majesty's Cabinet, I request to be informed—(1) What are, if any, the Orders in Council or orders of the High Commissioner of Western Pacific, or of the authorities of Eastern Pacific, in reference to the Hervey and Rarotongan Groups, and what islands are included in these groups respectively; (2) If these groups are under the jurisdiction of the High Commissioner of the Western Pacific or the authorities of the Eastern Pacific; (3) Whether the same have been annexed to or are simply under protection of the British Government.

S. E. W. BAKER, Secretary.

Vice-Consul LEEFE to the SECRETARY, Tongan Government.

SIR,—

24th October, 1889.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22nd instant, No. 14, and with reference to it, and to my letter to which it purports to be a reply, I beg to remind you that you have not complied with the request contained in the letter above alluded to, which was "to forward to me a copy of the engagement under which the men were procured, and to state whether they were recruited with the sanction of the resident British official at Rarotonga."

I have, &c.,

R. BECKWITH LEEFE, Vice-Consul.

The HIGH COMMISSIONER and CONSUL-GENERAL to Mr. LEEFE.

SIR,—

Government House, Suva, Fiji, 19th November, 1889.

In reply to your Despatch No. 67, of the 5th November instant, relative to the introduction by the Government of Tonga of forty-one natives from the Island of Mangaia, one of the Hervey or Cook's Group, for the purpose of working them upon the various banana and other plantations of the Tongan Government, I have to instruct you as follows:—

2. The islands brought under the protection of the British Government during the months of October and November, 1888, are the whole of the Hervey or Cook's group of islands, the chief of which are Aitutaki, Hervey, Takutea, Mitiero, Atiu, Mauki, Rarotonga, and Mangaia. The limits of the area over which British protection extends do not include Hull Island or any islands to the east-south-east of that spot.

3. I am of opinion that at present, and until the wishes of Her Majesty's Government are