

The coin imported in 1889 was stated at \$21,049, and in 1890 at \$10,842. There is no return for those years of the coin exported. The Chilian dollar can only be exported to Tahiti, Samoa, and other islands where it is legal currency. Sending it anywhere else would end in heavy loss. Taking this into account, the above figures warrant a belief that considerable sums must be hoarded by the natives. It is difficult otherwise to account for this continued import of silver to a market whose imports of merchandise steadily exceed the exports of produce.

Course of Trade.

It will be observed from the tables that California, direct and *via* Tahiti, is likely to be the chief competitor with New Zealand for the trade of the eastern Pacific. The connection of San Francisco with Tahiti is cheap and regular, being maintained by three smart sailing-vessels of 500 tons and upwards. They are subsidised by the Government of Tahiti as mail-packets, and receive £2,800 a year in all for a monthly service. The voyage has been done in twenty-three days, but generally takes thirty and upwards.

These vessels carry freight at 32s. per ton from Tahiti to San Francisco, and have brought goods from San Francisco to Tahiti at as little as 12s. per ton. They take large quantities of oranges, though the voyage is chiefly through the tropics, while that to New Zealand is the reverse. I have no means here of getting the complete statistics of Tahiti, but what information I have obtained is from trustworthy sources. Tahiti is the centre of fashion to the native race, as well as of trade, in the eastern islands, and is so closely connected with Rarotonga that reference to it is necessary to make the position of Rarotonga clear.

Tahiti is also, by occasional direct vessels, connected with Bordeaux, Hamburg, and Liverpool. At one time Sydney and Valparaiso were in active competition for the Tahitian trade, but both appear to have given way to San Francisco.

The approximate distances from various places to Tahiti are as follows: From Rarotonga, 560 miles; from Auckland, 2,200 miles; from Wellington, 2,450 miles; from Lyttelton, 2,700 miles; from Dunedin, 2,900 miles; from Sydney, 3,500 miles; from San Francisco, *via* Marquesas, 4,100 miles.

Between New Zealand and Tahiti communication is maintained by the steamer "Richmond." She does the round voyage in thirty-eight days—*i.e.*, from Auckland to Tonga, Samoa, Tahiti, and Rarotonga, and thence back to Auckland. Occasionally the "Richmond" calls at Rarotonga on the way from Samoa to Tahiti, and again calls on her homeward voyage from Tahiti to Auckland.

It will be observed that of the total imports and exports of the Cook Islands (£48,236), the sum of £30,965 was with New Zealand, and £17,271 with Tahiti, and, through Tahiti, with California.

Between Rarotonga and Tahiti the connection is maintained by the steamer "Richmond," before mentioned, and by several small vessels. The latter are all Californian-built and sometimes owned by natives of the Cook Islands. The Rarotonga people have just bought the "Poi," and the people of Aitutaki have bought the "Papeete." These are likely to run to Tahiti. The natives of Ngatangia (Rarotonga) have nearly finished for themselves a vessel of about 100 tons, which will possibly trade to Auckland as well as Tahiti. The tendency to expansion of this kind will be to increase the trade with Tahiti, but the capacity of the natives to manage the financial part of such undertakings is more than doubtful. If they succeed, larger vessels will be required, and they would then prefer connecting themselves with New Zealand. With the small vessels they now use, the short voyage to Tahiti is more practicable.

To maintain her hold of this portion of the Pacific, New Zealand must be careful to ship—of her own produce especially—nothing that is not sound and of good quality. I cannot lay too much stress on this, as I know that a contrary impression prevails in some quarters, and have witnessed the harm done by sending inferior meats, inferior biscuit and flour, and other articles of food which cannot be used, and yet require considerable time to replace them.

The small vessels built in New Zealand are strong and good, but they are not so saleable as similar vessels built in California. The latter are broader and more shallow, more slightly built, and of less cargo-carrying capacity. But they are better ventilated, have better accommodation, and are said to sail better and to be more easily handled. In the eye of the native these qualities more than compensate for inferiority in other respects. The demand for suitable vessels is growing in all the islands.

In hams, bacon, cheese, salted pork and beef, tinned meats and vegetables, biscuit, potatoes, onions, and all agricultural produce and live-stock, New Zealand should be able to compete successfully with California. But, I must repeat, only good articles should be shipped, and in the preparation of tinned meats more taste might be displayed. The various kinds are now too often flavourless and woolly, and the labels indicate differences which to the palate are inappreciable. Intrinsically the meat is very good, but, whether from being overcooked or from what other cause, is too often rendered flavourless. The American sausage and other meats, from Chicago especially, are superior to those from New Zealand in flavouring and get-up, though inferior in the original quality. As another illustration, I may refer to a favourite dish from America labelled "Pork and beans," but more properly to be called "Beans and pork," for the beans very largely predominate. This is retailed (2lb. tins) at 11d. sterling per tin in Rarotonga, and no doubt gives a good profit at that price.

The tinned mullet is much liked, but the low price lately of American tinned salmon has interfered with the sale. This salmon has been retailed at 9d. per tin.

Flour from New Zealand has not been found to keep so well as the flour from California, which commands the market. Biscuits from New Zealand are generally very good and have a good reputation, but the variety is small.

Woollen goods from New Zealand have an excellent name, but the demand is limited.