

PALMERSTON.

Palmerston is an atoll, with a land-area of one square mile, lying to the north-west of Rarotonga, some 273 miles distant. The reef carries a number of small islets, which are in the occupation of the descendants of the late William Masters, an old English sailor. One of these, Joel Masters, acts as Resident Agent, and he with six other members of the family constitute the island Council. The lagoon, which is about eight miles in diameter, does not carry pearl-shell at present, but it is hoped that spawn may be successfully introduced from other islands. The planting of the land is being well looked after by the Masters family. The population is 115.

MANUAE AND TE AU-O-TU.

These two small islands are enclosed within one reef, and are known as the Hervey Isles—a name that is frequently applied to the Cook Group as a whole. They contain approximately 500 acres and 800 acres respectively of good cocoanut land, and under the careful cultivation of the Cook Islands Trading Company, to whom they are leased, they will ere long produce an immense amount of copra. The islets form a dependency of Aitutaki, from which they are about sixty miles distant, and by which they were conquered in heathen times. By a recent decision of the Land Titles Court Te Au-o-Tu was awarded to the Arikis of Aitutaki and their clans, seventy-one owners, who claimed the islands by right of conquest; while in the case of Manuae an order was made in favour of the eighty-six descendants of the conquered people, their claim also having been recognised as good. This partition of the islands ends a long-standing contention between the rival claimants, and the judgment is admitted to be an equitable one. The Cook Islands Trading Company's lease runs for twenty-five years from the 7th June, 1898, and the rent will now be shared equally by the owners of the two islands. The population is stated as ten.

SUWARROW.

Suwarrow is a valuable atoll, 530 miles from Rarotonga. Its value lies chiefly in its lagoon, however, the land-area being very small. The lagoon is from eight to ten miles long, and about four miles across at the widest part, and it makes a splendid harbour, having an entrance sufficiently deep to admit vessels drawing up to 20 ft. of water. The island is under lease to Levers' Pacific Plantations (Limited) "for the purpose of removing guano or other fertilising substances therefrom, and of planting the land with cocoanuts, and for collecting pearl-shells, and for other purposes of a like nature." A portion of one of the reef islets, known as Anchorage Island, is vested in the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty as a reserve for naval purposes. Large quantities of pearl-shell of excellent quality have been obtained from the lagoon by the Pacific Trading Company, the predecessors of the present lessees; but diving has been discontinued for some time now, and the shell-beds are being given a long rest, the company having transferred its operations to Christmas Island. It is probable that on the expiry of the present lease in August, 1913, the islands Government will take over the control of the lagoon, so far, at least, as machine-diving is concerned. It is estimated that one machine will obtain from 40 to 45 tons of shell a year at Suwarrow. There are about thirty people on the island.

RAKAHANGA.

This island lies about twenty-five miles to the north of Manihiki. It is not so large as its neighbour, and the lagoon does not contain any pearl-shell, but otherwise the two islands are very much alike. They are owned and inhabited by the same people, and what has been said concerning Manihiki is true, for the most part, of Rakahanga also. The duties of Resident Agent are performed by Pañapa Wauharangi, a teacher of the London Missionary Society, whose good sense and great influence with the people enable him to fill the position very satisfactorily. Rakahanga exported 160 tons of copra last year; but here, as in Manihiki, the cocoanut-palms must be judiciously thinned out before the limit of production can be reached. Rakahanga has a population of 400.

DANGER (PUKAPUKA) AND NASSAU.

Of these two islands which lie away towards the north-west corner of the annexation boundary, it is not possible to say much at present. Concerning the former Colonel Gudgeon writes, "At Pukapuka I found a very singular population, who have now some knowledge of the Rarotongan language, but whose language is not intelligible to the Maori of the Pacific. This is such a primitive people that I considered it advisable for the present to leave them under their own ancient form of government, inasmuch as they are seldom visited by Europeans, and produce only a little copra." The island is a small atoll of about three miles in diameter, and the lagoon produces some pearl-shell. The population numbers about five hundred. Nassau is owned by a resident of Apia, Samoa.