

Sixth Day.
25 April 1907.

EMIGRATION.
(Mr. Deakin.)

been made, which so far has been most successful, to substitute white labour for black labour in this industry. That is actually proceeding. Each year for the last three or four years a great stride has been made. During the last twelve months we have returned to their homes some 3,000 Kanakas, Pacific Islanders, who have been engaged in this industry. Their place will have to be taken in the next season by white men. A certain proportion of the Kanakas are allowed to remain with us—those who have really made homes, or become, in their sense of the word, partially civilised and settled down. Their labour will be still available if they choose to give it. But undoubtedly the greater part of this work will have to be done by white men, and is cheerfully being done by white men. My last news from Australia is that the applicants for employment on those fields are numerous enough to cause it to be doubted whether we shall be dependent on immigration to permit of the whole crop being dealt with thoroughly this year. Personally I think that is too sanguine an estimate. I am not a North Queenslander, and therefore not qualified to speak by personal knowledge, but looking at the number of Kanakas leaving, and the great demand there is at present for labour in all parts of Australia at high rates of wages, it seems to me very doubtful whether we should be able to cope with the special demands of this crop, the biggest crop we have ever had, and a similar crop which will be reaped in the coming season. Therefore I think we shall need immigration. What I have been referring to I have said in a letter calling attention to this circular. I might proceed to the other portions of this statement, but really this general statement will show first of all a serious blunder in regard to the crushing, and next that it is a statement which is entirely one-sided—although, of course, quite honest—and is certain to be misleading.

Dr. JAMESON : Whom is that published by ?

Mr. DEAKIN : By this very Board of Emigration of which the Agents General have been complaining—the Emigration Information Office. In my letter of the 20th of April, I pointed out—“No doubt it would be a perfectly proper thing to instruct emigrants both on the nature of the work for which they are proposed to be engaged, and also to call their attention to the climatic conditions under which it is to be accomplished. All facts of this kind ought to be supplied and none suppressed; but it is not apparent why the members of the Board with their imperfect knowledge of the character of this employment, and apparently also of the extent to which it is being successfully carried on by white labour, should absolutely warn emigrants against the undertaking. Evidently the influence that such an official declaration on the part of the Colonial Office is likely to have upon other European Governments has been overlooked by those whose desire must be to encourage British settlers to seek new homes within the Empire. The circular of the Emigrants' Information Office dated 12th April is free from this objection, though the expression of opinion it contains is in Mr. Deakin's opinion decidedly too sweeping.” I will quote presently a further statement of the Emigration Board made in a letter to an applicant for British immigrants for Australia, to which my reply refers. The passages that I have read from the circular should have been accompanied by a few other sentences, stating that the greater part of this work is now being done by white labour; a great part of that white labour is British born; the whole of that work will have to be done in future, by steady degrees, more and more by white labour; the wages paid are high; for men who lead temperate lives and will take the ordinary precautions necessary in a different climate this work is thoroughly healthy. I am assured by those who have personal experience that some of the finest specimens of our manhood they have ever seen are to be found engaged in harvesting in the cane fields.