

During the war Great Britain has been practically out of the market, both as a purchaser of island products and as a supplier of manufactured goods, and consequently the United States of America has obtained a strong footing in trade matters. Now that business is slowly coming back to normal, the greatest efforts will need to be put forth if the trade is to be swung back to British channels.

Germany had a considerable trade with Samoa before the war, especially in cotton and in black, blue-black, wine-coloured, and striped cashmeres. The popular width is 42 in., with the selvedge the same colour as the material. As the Samoans beat their clothes when they wash them, it is important that the colours should be fast.

There is a considerable demand for prints, drills, buttercloth, mercerized muslin, cheap lace for insertions; knitting-wool in yellow, red, and blue, used for the fringes of the fancy work done by the women; white cotton sheeting, handkerchiefs (plain and with coloured borders), towels, and sewing-cottons. While there still exists a demand for men's ready-made white suits, a large business is now being done by Chinese tailors, the smart young Samoan preferring a made-to-measure suit even at high prices.

The hardware trade, outside iron bars, sheets (plain and galvanized), plates, pipes and fittings, and fencing-wire, is not considerable. There is a demand for lamps, lamp-glasses, knives (especially butchers' and special knives used for grass and weed cutting), axes, saws, scissors and shears, razors, iron boilers (from 1 to 4 gallons). There are about seventy motor-cars in and around Apia.

There is a good trade in hair-oils, scents in fancy bottles, fancy perfumed soaps, shaving and tooth brushes of a cheap description, and women's cheap hair ornaments. The record of imports, however, will give a complete knowledge of the requirements of the Samoan trade.

The traders have outlying stations in both Upolu and Savaii, and, although they have ceased entirely to barter their goods for copra and native products, it is expected that Samoans selling to particular traders should in exchange purchase their requirements from the same trader.

Time.

At present the time in New Zealand is one day ahead of that in Samoa. This leads to a certain amount of confusion, and there seems to be no technical objection to dropping a day in Samoa and so bringing it into line with New Zealand. Both countries having the same time would simplify matters considerably. We therefore recommend that the Samoan time be altered to coincide with that ruling in New Zealand.

Cold Storage.

At present there is no cold storage available in Samoa. The erection of a plant would not only be of advantage to the residents generally, but would assist the New Zealand export trade in beef and mutton.

In conclusion, we beg to quote from the evidence of one of the witnesses in connection with trade possibilities between Samoa and New Zealand:—

The possibility of an improvement of the trade between New Zealand and Samoa is very small, and the reason for this lies with the New Zealand merchants. Somehow they seem to think that trade must come their way anyhow, and they make no effort to hold or improve it.

There is a lack of system in the way New Zealand invoices are made out. They do not show clearly how the goods are packed or what each package contains; measurements and sizes are given insufficiently; and, what is worse, complaints bring no improvement. New Zealand representatives sell only the goods they have, without paying sufficient attention to the special requirements of the Samoan trader, and as a consequence trade drifts to suppliers in other countries, who lay themselves out to specialize and satisfy their customers.

What is wanted by New Zealand merchants is orderly system, insight, and proper consideration as to the proper kind of merchandise required. If this is not taken up, the trade will remain with Australia and America. There is much talk in the New Zealand Chambers of Commerce about increasing the business between New Zealand and Samoa, but it ends there. An opportunity was presented of capturing the biggest share of a very profitable trade, but so far nothing has been done. If you want to improve the trade between the two places rouse your merchants to a sense of the opportunities they are allowing to pass.

If the above statement is true it is a strong accusation of a lack of business methods on the part of New Zealand merchants.