

You told me as we went through the plantation this morning that it was practically free of the beetle?—Yes. There is no beetle in the whole of the plantation, but in order to keep it in that state we have to fight our neighbours. The Samoans are making new plantations in our neighbourhood. The clearing of the bush is done in a very indifferent manner. They simply get the trees down and do not burn the wood. The bark and the leaves rot, and at once provide a harbouring-place where the beetles lay their eggs and the larvæ hatch. In this way the breeding goes on, and in a few months' time they would be flying all over our plantation. Since the beetle pest arrived in Samoa the boys on this plantation have gathered about two and a half million beetles and larvæ and eggs. We work at least five miles beyond our boundaries, and all this land has to be searched by our boys. We also do the same work on the western side, where the Natives have their cultivation. There is no doubt that the great danger to this plantation is the land of our neighbours.

Am I to understand, then, that if your plantation is allowed to go back the plantations of the Natives will become very much worse from the beetles?—Undoubtedly.

Do you think the Native plantations would be able to cope with the beetles if this plantation were allowed to go back to nature?—I do not.

In other words, if this plantation were allowed to go back to nature, you are of opinion that the beetle will take charge of the whole island?—It would, without any doubt.

What will happen to this plantation, upon which you have spent fifty years of very good work, if your 145 black boys go and you cannot replace them with any other kind of indentured labour?—It will be destroyed in a very short time.

How long do you think it will take to destroy this plantation from the beetles and the weeds?—It could be entirely destroyed in about eight or ten years. If to-day the black boys went away and the plantation was not under control and no work was done for a year, it would take at least another five years to put the plantation back in the state in which it is to-day. If it was neglected for two years it would take another ten years to bring it back into condition again, and, of course, a great deal of expense would be entailed on the owners.

It has been recommended that Javanese should be imported: have you had any experience of them?—I had a friend on another plantation who has told me that the Javanese are good workers. I have had no personal experience of them, and I do not know whether you would be able to get them or not.

Could you give us an approximate idea of the amount of money that has been spent on the improvement of the Mulifanua Estate?

Mr. PATRICK (Military Liquidator): That information, together with full particulars as to the value of the estate, cost of labour, and working-expenses, will be embodied in my report.

Mr. G. J. ANDERSON: Do the black boys take up with Samoan women?—No.

Do you think, if we succeed in importing Chinese labour, it would be any benefit to bring their women with them?—Very likely. The women could do easy work, such as cutting copra, like the black and Samoan women are doing. I think there would always be light work for the women to do.

Mr. LUKE: Do you think the half-caste Samoans would work on the plantations as labourers?—No.

Mr. WITTY: What is the average output per acre?—The output is from 1,150 to 1,200 tons. That is from 3,800 acres.

Mr. YOUNG: Have the black boys any vices?

Mr. PATRICK: I think I would be speaking for Mr. Helg if I said they are natural and therefore they have some, but I am inclined to think they have not as many as we have.

Mr. YOUNG: Are there any vices indulged in here which interfere with their work? We are given to understand that the Chinese gamble so much that it interferes with their work?

Mr. HELG: The black boys have no vices which interfere with their work.

Mr. YOUNG (to Mr. Helg): Have the Samoans?—They do not work at all—that is the trouble.

Mr. CRAIGIE: Could you give us any suggestion how indentured labour could be obviated? Could you have a free market and employ whom you like and the labourers work for whom they like?—I do not know of any other suggestion. The existence of Samoan plantations depends on a supply of labour.

Mr. BARTRAM: What is the rate of pay that the black boys get?—£2 a month and board and free lodging.

Mr. PATRICK: They are actually receiving £2 10s.: 10s. has been accruing to them from previous years.

Mr. BARTRAM (to Mr. Helg): What are their hours of work?—From 6 to 11, and 12.30 to about 5 o'clock.

Do they work by the day or do you give them tasks?—It depends. When I think it is more suitable for the plantation I give them piecework, and contract work when I think that is more suitable.

They have no choice in the matter?—No; I give them what I think is right.

You say the black man is a better man than the Chinaman. Am I to understand by that that he is more amenable to discipline?—I think so. He is more obedient and not so menacing as the Chinaman.

If you gave him a task which he thought unfair he would not do it?—No.

Mr. ANDERSON: Has any attempt been made at any time to keep down the weeds by machinery? Is that possible?—It is absolutely impossible. The whole area is too stony.

Has any attempt ever been made to devise a machine to do it?—It is a difficult work for the black boy to handle a knife without breaking it.

Mr. S. G. SMITH: If the whole plantation were in full bearing, at what would you estimate the output?—I would estimate it at least as 2,000 tons—about double what it is now.