

Solomon Islanders—Total (1914), 850; deaths, ordinary, 75; deaths, epidemic, 93; repatriated to date, 277; balance in Samoa, 405. The balance of these Solomon Islanders, we understand, are awaiting repatriation.

The following table shows dates and costs of repatriation :—

Steamship.	Sailed.	Number of Coolies.	Cost.	Cost per Head.
			£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Upolu	8 August, 1915 ..	320	3,144 13 7	9 16 6
Shanghai	9 September, 1916 ..	231	3,033 13 9	13 2 8
Atua	2 February, 1917 ..	61	1,006 10 2	16 10 0
Taiyuen	22 January, 1918 ..	380	7,774 14 6	20 9 3
Taiyuen	19 September, 1918 ..	262	6,122 13 7	20 7 4
		1,254		

The above tremendous cost of repatriating these 1,254 coolies should not have been incurred. We feel quite sure that a large majority of the coolies would have been prepared under the circumstances to sign fresh indentures for a further period of three years, or until the termination of the war. The limiting of the period for reindenture to six months has caused dissatisfaction to the coolies as well as the farmer.

In some cases practically no opportunity was given the coolie to reindenture, the employer being therefore forced to pay without having any option in the matter. This can be definitely proved from records in the Chinese Commissioner's office.

Chinese Crimes.

Particulars of Chinese crimes punished by imprisonment of three months or over, since 1915, as supplied by the Chinese Commissioner: No. 1296—seven years, rape; No. 2896—seven years, rape; No. 2752—ten years, breaking and entering; No. 1608—seven years, breaking and entering; No. 3127—two years, assault; No. 2741—two years, theft; No. 2749—two years theft; No. 2083—three years, breaking and entering; No. 1443—two years, breaking and entering; No. 2960—one year, knowingly helping thieves; No. 1616—nine months, knowingly helping thieves; No. 3141—two years, knowingly helping thieves; No. 2258—six months, assault on police; No. 360—two years, inflicting bodily harm; No. 1578—six months, assault; No. 2226—one year, theft; No. 2638—five years, inflicting bodily harm; No. 1183—one year, assault; No. 3237—six months, assault; No. 2559—one year, assault; No. 3634—two years, assault; No. 3643—one year, assault; No. 1837—six months, theft; No. 1779—six months, bodily harm; No. 941—three months, theft.

A Plea for Indentured Labour.

(The following article, written by Mr. Alan Cobcroft, an acknowledged authority on the subject, appeared in the *Samoa Times* in September, 1919).

Are the Chinese a menace to the future of Samoa? Are we to recruit more of these men for our agricultural pursuits or not? If not, is it proposed to replace them with other indentured labour less inimical to the interests of Samoa, or are we to understand that the idea of indentured labour in any shape or form will be repugnant to our Mandatory? These are the questions the many thousands of shareholders and other people interested in tropical agriculture in Samoa would like settled.

If it is decided that the interests of Samoa will be the best served by maintaining a plentiful supply of economic labour, then, can we get a better class of labourer than the Chinaman—one who is more amenable to argument, or who conforms to the existing laws and regulations of the country more readily: personally, I doubt it. And, let us heed, the evil we know is better than that we do not know.

Chinese indentured labour was first introduced to Samoa in 1902 by the Planters' Association, it having, even at that early stage, been found, by costly experience, impossible to depend upon the local labour-supply, and that in order to be in a position to compete with other tropical countries more favourably situated an adequate supply of cheap labour was essential.

Under sanction and supervision of the Chinese Government, the men were recruited through Messrs. Wendt and Co., recruiting agents, Hong Kong. The method of recruiting was simply to make known that a certain number of labourers were required for Samoa. The intending recruits volunteered. The conditions of the agreements under which they were to indenture were thoroughly explained to them, and they either accepted and signed on, or not, as they thought fit. If they elected to sign on they were medically examined before being allowed to indenture. When it is remembered that the population of China is over four hundred millions, or something like ninety-nine persons to the square mile, it will be readily understood that it was not difficult to recruit the few hundreds required for Samoa.

Having succeeded in recruiting the necessary number, they were brought to Hong Kong, where they were medically examined and embarked upon a specially fitted transport for Samoa. During the trip they were cared for by a doctor specially engaged for that purpose. Upon arrival at their destination they were allotted to the different planters, as requisitioned, taken to their respective plantations, and housed in hutments specially erected and passed by the Government doctor for that particular purpose.

During their three years' indenture they were only required to perform the different work necessary to the running of the estate. They have as an overseer one of their own nationality. If it is found necessary to punish any of the men they are sent to the Chinese Commissioner with a note setting out the charge against them. The charge is carefully investigated, and, if substantiated, the man, should it be his first offence, is admonished; if it is other than a first offence he is fined a few shillings, commensurate to the charge. On the other hand, if the labourer has been unjustly treated, or has any grievance, he has the same privilege of placing his case before his Commissioner, and is sure of impartial justice.

During his indenture the man has proper medical treatment, being treated at the Government hospital by a Government doctor.

The fact that at the time of writing there are some eight hundred odd indentured Chinamen in Samoa, whose original indenture expired years ago, and that each and every one of these men has had numerous opportunities—had he so desired—of returning to China, but instead preferred to be reindentured, is in itself sufficient guarantee of the fair and equitable treatment they have received as indentured immigrants.

As a citizen the Chinaman has, I contend, been a quiet, law-abiding subject, keeping much to himself and interfering very little with the community at large.

The immediate seriousness of the planting position in Samoa cannot possibly be exaggerated or underestimated. It is imperative that labour of some sort should be secured, otherwise it will be absolutely impossible to carry on. Three large companies have already gone into bankruptcy, representing a capital of approximately £120,000. Another, with a capital of £90,000 and an area of 1,200 acres, is on its last legs. Most plantations are working short-handed, unable in many cases to even harvest their crops, while weeding and many other important requirements have to be shelved. The outlook is indeed alarming, and, unless steps are taken at once, hopeless!

Effect of Forced Repatriation.—The policy pursued by the Administration (acting under instructions, I understand, from the Home Government) of forcing the planters to repatriate those labourers whose contracts expired during the occupation, and who desired to return to China, and of refusing to sanction the recruiting of labour to replace these men, has had a disastrous effect upon tropical agriculture in Samoa. As each transport was despatched the demand for indentured labour quickly overran the supply, and labour getting scarcer and scarcer each year. Planters, in order