

*Labour.*

Overshadowing the whole trade development of Samoa stands the labour problem.

At present there are 138,500 acres of alienated land and 586,500 acres of land still held by the Samoans in Upolu and Savaii. Of this alienated land 18,386 acres are in coconut, cocoa, and rubber plantations, for which there is little Samoan labour available. Prior to the war there were about two thousand contract labourers employed; at present, owing to extensive repatriation, there are about 1,166. Naturally this decrease in labour implies a corresponding falling-off of production. With insufficient labour, moreover, plantations become overgrown with weeds and undergrowth, which form a safe breeding-place for the rhinoceros-beetle. This dangerous pest, if allowed to spread, would rapidly destroy not only the 16,000 acres of European plantations, but the far greater acreage owned by the Samoans. We are informed by reliable witnesses that the Samoan profits by the example of the well-cultivated European areas.

It has been objected that there is an undue amount of sexual intercourse between the imported Chinese and the Samoans, but we are convinced the reports on this subject are much exaggerated. It is untrue that the introduction of Chinese into Samoa is reducing the Samoan women to a state of prostitution. Perhaps regulations might be made stricter. If, for example, there were a rigorous inspection of Chinese quarters, and absolutely enforced repatriation at the end of three years, little trouble, we think, would be experienced. Unfortunately, during the war period, owing to the shortage of shipping, the Chinese have been kept in the islands for much longer periods, and as a consequence opportunity has been afforded them to learn the language and to become closely acquainted with Samoan women. When shipping becomes normal, regularity of service will ensue, and contracts ought then to be rigorously carried out. The housing question perhaps needs looking into; but, even as things are, living-conditions in Samoa are much better than in Canton.

No one would deny that Samoan labour would be better than Chinese labour if the Samoan would work, but he will not work as an employee. There is a growing demand for tropical produce, and as far as Samoa is concerned that demand cannot be satisfied except by the use of imported labour.

The death of eight thousand Samoans during the recent epidemic has further aggravated the labour problem. However, with better medical attention and stricter port regulations the death-rate should be so reduced that a steady increase of population can be looked for; in fact, this is, according to the statistics submitted, now taking place. With a judicious selection of imported labour, strict regulations regarding matters sexual, with improved living-accommodation, and increased payments to meet the higher cost of living, with opportunity afforded for wives to accompany their husbands, we think imported labour would be in the best interests of the Natives themselves. When, if ever, Samoa increases her Native population, when Samoans learn the science of agriculture and acquire the habit of work, then the importation of labour may happily be dispensed with. Until that time arrives imported labour is, in our opinion, a necessity.

It has been suggested that the islands should be handed over entirely to the Samoans, and that they should work out their own destiny as the Tongans are doing. This also is a dream, and a dream not in the best interest of the Samoans, for it would leave their country an easy prey to any aggressive Power. While their methods may not be perfect, Great Britain and New Zealand will at least deal honestly with the Samoans and govern them fairly.

We understand that Colonel Logan, the Military Administrator, 1914-18, believed it possible for the whole work of the islands to be done by the Samoans, and he accordingly repatriated indentured labour without trying to replace it. Results proved that his idea was a mistake, which he admitted and tried to undo before he resigned his position.

Unfortunately, the Samoans are communistic in their ideas of life, and this fact has an important bearing on labour matters. It is expected that the man who has should support the man who has not, and as a consequence the man who does work