

the labor traffic, and walking alone and unarmed across the continent. Any one who reads the letters he has published from time to time in *The Leader* will see that he is essentially a keen observer, taking in all around him, but not tempted to theorise on the moral or political bearings of what he sees. It is noteworthy that he was not roused to protest against the atrocities that came to his knowledge when he first returned from his cruises among the islands; and his letter, which we published yesterday, is rather a contribution to the knowledge of facts than an outburst of passionate indignation. In a word, he is no closet philanthropist, of the class Queensland planters love to decry, but a practical man, inclined to take the world as he finds it, and only interposing with his exhaustive knowledge when he finds facts unwholesomely misstated. Now, what is the result of Mr. Morrison's experience? He tells us that all the regulations by which the Queensland Government affects to protect the natives recruited as laborers are evaded in the most sweeping manner. The natives have to tell a Government agent that they engage of their own free will. Very true; but as the Queensland Government takes no means for providing that the natives are not deceived, scarcely a native knows what kind of engagement he is entering into, what plantation he is going to, or even what country the ship he sails in is bound to. Again, the Queensland Government declares that the chief friends or relatives of the boys engaging are not to be bribed into bringing pressure to bear on them. "If this regulation were enforced," says Mr. Morrison, "no labor vessel would ever make a second voyage." The boys are in fact purchased from their chief or their friends, whenever they are not duped into joining. If any among them attempts to escape from the ship, "the orders are to shoot him," and should he jump overboard, the sailors on watch have a spirited emulation as to who shall send the first bullet through his head. "Righteous-minded men," says Mr. Morrison, "favor this labor traffic, but surely even they cannot justify the recruiting of women." We dare not mince the facts Mr. Morrison has stated. Where a pretty bright girl leaves the islands in the company of her husband, she is liable, as in the case Mr. Morrison saw, to be taken from him forcibly by some sailor; and where there are many women on board every sailor has his mistress. Part of the terrible fate of these women is to be contaminated with that fearful disease which scourges the sin of great cities; and if the population of these islands is wasting away before our eyes, it is not from the contact with civilisation, as traders in human flesh wish us to believe, but from the natural effects of gin and syphilis. Neither is the fate of laborers on the Queensland plantations at all of that rosyate hue with which Mr. Archer paints it to fashionable gatherings in London. There are kind masters and there are bad masters; but the bad masters are numerous, and are un molested by the law. Mr. Morrison tells us of one of the finest sugar plantations in Queensland, whose owner—a second Legree—is fond of showing visitors how he can use his fiat or his foot, drive a naked laborer with a tomahawk through a terrible prickly hedge, and is responsible for one of the worst massacres that ever occurred in connection with the slave trade. Assume the years of degrading bondage outlived, and that the laborers are allowed to return home, the women tainted with diseases that mean barrenness and living death; the men familiarised with drink, blasphemy and brutality. What are the wages they take back with them? The Queensland Government forbids the exportation of arms and ammunition; but, in the face of this regulation, it seems that a returning laborer carries on an average three guns with him, and more than 100 rounds of ammunition. His intention undoubtedly is to figure with effect in the wars of his native island, and to be counted as an ally by rival chiefs. As, however, his calculations are based on the chance of his being returned to his own home, we know that in all likelihood they will be defeated. Habitually the slave-trading ships find it easier to land him on some island to which he does not belong, and he is promptly knocked on the head by the natives on whose territory he has intruded.

We submit that Mr. Morrison's revelations, terrible as they are, are no more than what we have already long known, and we scarcely needed the private letter in which he has given us fuller particulars of the cases to which he referred to be assured that he was not exceeding the truth. The fact is the Queensland regulations, which are paraded to mislead outsiders, are as valueless for the protection of the unhappy natives as the agents who accompany the black-birding ships. What can a single agent do among a gang of ruffians? As a matter of fact he sees nothing, but if he declined to be made drunk, and insisted on using his eyes, we cannot doubt he would carry his life in his hands. He it remembered that whenever we get the independent testimony of a missionary, a traveller, or a Queen's officer, it is invariably to the same effect as Mr. Morrison's letter, and that letter comes to us with a transcendent interest, not because the facts told in it are new, but because the writer, an educated young man of high character, witnessed them with his own eyes. It is surely time to ask ourselves whether we ought not to interpose while there is yet time, and demand, not that the annexation of New Guinea be disallowed, but that that island and the neighboring group be put under the protectorate of the Crown. A Governor like Sir Arthur Gordon, who protected the natives as English subjects ought to be protected, would make very short work of the Queensland kidnappers. Let no one cheer himself with the fancy that we in Melbourne are not responsible for the horrors of the slave trade in a neighboring colony, or that Divine justice will not one day exact our share of the reckoning from us, even to the uttermost farthing. It is we who are at this moment backing up Queensland—a suspected colony—in London with the whole weight of our influence and character; it is we who will have to suffer from the degradation of labor as slavery is more and more naturalised in the north; it is our children who may have to free Australia by civil war from the curse of forced labor; and if these islands, denuded of their natural and innocent population, are taken for convict settlements by the great powers, or are colonised by Chinamen and Malays, it is this country which will suffer for the recklessness of the present generation. Even now it is too late to restore confidence and innocence to the islands which Queensland civilisation has visited; to wash out the blot of blood from our history; but it is not too late to arrest

the growth of the evil, to keep New Guinea from oppression, and to keep this continent for a free people. When we read the descriptions of the floating hells in which Queensland enterprises organise a labor traffic, we are tempted to wonder that the fires of heaven do not consume ship and crew. But it is not in this tumultuous manner that God's vengeance executes itself. We shall multiply sugar plantations, keep fire-proachable Sabbaths, and boast of our imports and exports for stores of years before the thunderbolt falls. When it comes it will be inexorable.

TOWARDS the end of last month the ratepayers of Yarrawonga were thrown into a great state of indignation by an ugly rumor of bribery and corruption in connection with the recent appointment of the secretary to the shire. Since then an inquiry has been made into the case, and the rumor has been found to have been not exaggerated in the slightest. The name of the secretary in question was West, and the allegations set out that West received the appointment solely through the influence of a Councillor Sloss, who occupied the position of president of the shire. Sloss had been induced to interest himself in West's behalf through the instrumentality of a Mr. G. F. Salas, who, in a private letter to West, tells exactly how he went about it:—"Tom and I worked old Sloss 'right this time. I paid him £2 6s account, and he voted straight. Since then he has applied to me for the balance (£3), which I have paid him. When you are in funds you can send me a cheque for the amount." This pithy epistle fell into the hands of an unfriendly councillor, who immediately made it public. The excuse of "Old Sloss" is that he only took the money to indemnify him for loss which would arise out of the postponement of a trip—which he was on the point of making to Gippsland when West's friends asked him to stay and vote for him; and West himself states that he was not in collusion with either Sloss or Salas. The astonishing thing is, not that Sloss should have taken the money, but that he should think the plea he put in sufficient to justify him. For whatever purposes he took it, it was a bribe, and no amount of casuistry can explain it otherwise. Sloss was bribed, and Salas was the briber. He did not think so highly of West's candidature as to stay and vote for him of his own accord, and his vote was therefore not a spontaneous act. West got the appointment through it, and the appointment was therefore the result of bribery. Mr. Sloss seems to rely upon the argument that if this was bribery then payment of members is bribery; but we are quite unable to follow the reasoning by which he arrives at this curious conclusion. A member does not buy his constituency; and what he is paid the law of the land allows him. There is no law that we are aware of which justifies Mr. Sloss in taking £5 to stay and vote for Mr. West, or Mr. Salas in giving it him. But on this point the Crown-law officers, to whom the matter has been referred, will probably afford him enlightenment. From a public point of view the case is a serious one, independent of the criminality of the particular persons concerned in it. For it shows how loosely appointments are made to municipal offices. The secretary of a shire council should be a man of special attainments. As a rule he should be able to assist the councillors with his advice and to interpret municipal law for them whenever they need it. On the correctness of his interpretation it may happen, that very large interests are at stake, and therefore an incompetent or untrustworthy secretary may involve the ratepayers in very heavy losses. If appointments are to be made as Mr. West's was, we do not see the use of the council putting the ratepayers to the expense of advertising for candidates at all. The money is clearly thrown away, and the most economical plan would be to let Mr. G. F. Salas and his friends put their hands into their pockets for the amount. What has happened at Yarrawonga may happen anywhere else to-morrow; and it is all the more necessary therefore that as much publicity as possible should be given to the incident. We are very much afraid that Mr. West is not the only applicant for a secretaryship who has succeeded in getting it through the influence of his backers at the council table; and we dare say Mr. Sloss could draw upon his experience without much difficulty to find some fellow-sinner to keep him in countenance.

THE members of the Police Force who held a meeting yesterday at the Russell-street barracks to protest against a memorandum of the Chief Commissioner allotting £s. 6d. per day as their pay "for all time," appear to us to have a very fair cause for remonstrance. They say that they joined the force upon the understanding that they were to be paid £s. 6d. a day for two years, with an additional shilling after the expiration of that period; and that to cut off that increment is a breach of trust with those who entered upon those terms. They further point to the fact that the police in New South Wales receive larger emoluments and privileges; and that in Victoria a corporation laborer in the streets or a railway porter, is better paid. We do not know whether this is the case or not. But, however it may be, the simple question is, are the police underpaid, considering the difficult character of their services? And this question should be answered on its merits. One of the speakers yesterday appeared to believe that Mr. Service was the instigator of the Chief Commissioner's memorandum; and it certainly does seem rather a high handed act for the latter officer to undertake on his own responsibility. Whoever is moving in the matter, this is scarcely the time to make the change. A very little more than a month has elapsed since the Police Commissioner sent in his report, and a considerable portion of it is devoted to the discussion of the very question which the constables discussed yesterday at Russell-street. The Chief Commissioner or his advisers have not only neglected the recommendations made in that document, but they have gone directly counter to them. The Commissioners suggested that the pay shall be for the first two years of service £s. 6d. per day, 7s. for the next two years, 7s. 6d. for the next two, and 8s. a day after 10 years service. Married men living outside barracks to receive 6d. a day in lieu of quarters, fuel, light and water, quarters to be only provided for married men in charge of stations. That wherever practicable, superintending constables should have quarters situated. The proposal to have quinquennial increments, like members of the civil service, has not

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WE published yesterday an important letter from Mr. Morrison with respect to the Queensland slave trade; and at a time when Queensland is trying to annex New Guinea to herself with the avowed support of our own Premier it is important to understand what the fate of the natives of New Guinea will be if they are left to the tender mercy of the Queensland sugar planters. Mr. Morrison is not an interested or an untrustworthy observer. He is a medical student of Melbourne University; and having a passion for exploration he has been training himself in every possible way for a life of adventure in Africa, heading down the Murray, shipping as a surgeon on board a vessel engaged in