

pamphleteering against the Kanaka labour traffic may be reduced to three counts. It is said, in the first place, that little care is taken to land the labourers who are returning from the plantations at their own homes, and that they run the risk of being sent ashore among a hostile tribe, who would not hesitate to sacrifice their lives. It has been urged, in the second place, that natives are taken by violence from their villages, and compelled against their will to work on the sugar plantations in Fiji or Queensland. And, thirdly, it is maintained that many of the natives, who accept of their own free will the engagements offered to them, have no idea as to whither they are going or the service that is expected of them, or the term for which they are engaged. It is on account of such statements that the cry has been raised that the labour traffic is a modified form of slavery. This agitation is due to some extent to missionaries. And it must be said plainly that it emanates from missionaries who have not been able to instil habits of industry and method into the natives whom they desire to control. If the natives were taught to develop the resources of their own soil, there might be strong arguments against the system of taking them away from their own villages. But which is the more humane system—to leave them in a state of savagery and war, or to offer them inducements to settle down for a few years to steady work? From the humanitarian standpoint there is as much to be said for shipping the islanders as for leaving them to make clubs out of forest boughs or to buy rifles from French traders.

In discussing the subject we must bear in mind the fact that we have to deal with the system as it is now carried on, and that we cannot in fairness attribute any of the old stories of kidnapping to the present management. Now, the idea that the returning labourers are not landed at their own homes is completely disproved by the experience of our special correspondent. At the very first place at which the schooner called the "boys" were doubtful as to whether it was their own home, and it was only when they were within a few yards of the land that they were able to recognise their friends and relatives and to be sure that they were at home. But the Government agent gave it to be understood that, whatever might be the delay to the recruiting vessel, he would not land the returning labourers until he had found some place with which they were acquainted and in which they would be welcomed. The description of the scene, as it appears in our columns of yesterday, shows what care is taken to carry the returning passengers to the very village from which they were recruited. As to the vague talk about kidnapping, we need only point out that the punishment which would follow any attempt at violence is sufficient to deter even the most unscrupulous recruiters, and that the report of the Government agent, to say nothing of the complaints that would be made by missionaries and settlers and natives, would ensure the detection of the culprit. It may be that the chief of a tribe, desirous of obtaining the European goods which are displayed by the recruiting vessels, may use all his influence to send some of his young men to the plantations. If this be the case, it is no greater stretch of chiefly authority than is allowed in Fiji, which has been governed [with more or less ill-success for a number of years in accordance with the principles of Exeter-hall. It may be that the young man's relatives influence him towards making an engagement with the agents of the planters. If this be so it is simply a repetition of what happens in civilised society, in which hundreds of young men are driven by the kindly solicitude of their friends into professions for which they are wholly unfit and into occupations which they dislike.

But in the Kanaka labour traffic the offer of employment is made directly to those who are likely to be applicants, and each one to whom the offer is made knows exactly what are the terms of the engagement. It could not be otherwise. The savage is naturally suspicious towards strangers, and he makes it his first business to find out who the strangers are and what they mean to do. The North American Indians understood the difference between the two European nationalities that competed for the possession of the continent, and chose their own side. At the present time the dwellers in the valley of the Zambesi and even in the far-off forests of Uganda know something of the aims and objects which the Europeans set before themselves. In the South Seas long experience has taught the people knowledge. When a man-of-war drops anchor in a bay, they know thoroughly well what the power of the ship is; when a schooner creeps along the reef with a ball at the masthead, they understand that it has come to recruit labour; when the returning labourers are once set on shore every member of the tribe soon knows something about the conditions of work and wages in Queensland. To say that the natives are misled is sheer bunkum. It is reported that in Fiji a gang of labourers once struck work after the lapse of thirty-six moons, declaring that their three years' engagement had come to an end, and that the magistrate had some difficulty in explaining to them that they were required to work for three moons more. More significant still is the fact, narrated by our correspondent, that at Bundaberg many of the Polynesians were content to remain on the plantations, and that even after the passing of the new act the planters were not obliged for some time to send out recruiting vessels. The idea that the infelicitous natives of the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands are ignorant of the engagement which is offered to them must be abandoned.

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"I am in the place where I am demanded of conscience to speak the truth, and therefore the truth I speak, impugn it whose list."

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1892.

It will be noticed that our correspondent gives a very different description of the recruiting of Polynesian labourers from that which has formed the basis of innumerable speeches at Exeter-hall and at church meetings both in Australia and the United Kingdom. Our correspondent recounts the facts that he has seen; the philanthropists who begin by assuming that English planters and traders must be cruel and unscrupulous and oppressive, have to rely on their own imagination or on the wearisome reiteration of old grievances which can never be heard of under the present system. The indictment that has been made is pulpitoering and