

1879.

NEW ZEALAND.

NATIVE LABOURERS IN NAVIGATOR ISLANDS.

(PAPERS RELATIVE TO ALLEGED CRUELITIES.)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

The Hon. the PREMIER to His Excellency the GOVERNOR.

Memorandum for His Excellency.

SIR George Grey presents his compliments to the Marquis of Normanby, and respectfully advises His Excellency to forward to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the memorandum of which copies are enclosed, upon Sir Michael Hicks Beach's despatch, No. 50, of 18th October, 1878, covering reports respecting alleged cruelties to Polynesian labourers in the Navigator Islands. No. 2 and enclosures.

Wellington, 15th February, 1879.

G. GREY.

Enclosure.

1. It has been reported to Her Majesty's Government that Mr. F. Cornwall, who was British Acting-Consul in Samoa on the 27th November, 1877, had in view the establishment of a plantation, at the smallest possible cost, at Lata, where he claimed to be the owner of about 8,000 acres of land. The natives denied the validity of the sale of a great part of this land; but it has not yet been shown that he is not owner of that portion of the estate which he was putting under cultivation.

2. Mr. Cornwall proposed to carry on the works on this estate by means of coloured labour brought from the Line Islands, in the Pacific. It is stated that the well-being of these labourers was overlooked in the attempt to keep down expenses.

3. In pursuance of his plans, Mr. Cornwall brought, on the 27th November, 1877, in the cutter "Bertha," 15 tons register, seventy coloured labourers*—men, women, and children—who were landed on the beach at Lata. There was no shelter ready for them.

4. About the 27th December, a second load of sixty coloured labourers—men, women, and children—were brought in the "Bertha" to Lata. These are said to have consisted of the weaker labourers and their families, who had been kept for three weeks on an estate in Samoa called Magia, to recover their strength. According to the statement of the manager, Mr. Moors, this batch of labourers was supplemented by the sick people from the Magia estate. Mr. Moors, who is an American subject, was left by Mr. Cornwall at Lata, in charge of the plantation as manager.

5. No list of these labourers was recorded in the Consulate, and the list given by Mr. Cornwall at Lata was made out some time after the arrival of the people, and was imperfect. Mr. Moors had either kept no account of deaths, or he purposely misinformed Mr. Maudslay, the Deputy Commissioner, who inquired into the subject.

* A 15-ton registered vessel would be of about the following dimensions:—Length, 42 feet; beam, 14 feet; depth of hold, 5 feet 6 inches; and would have a cubic capacity of 1,500 feet, exclusive of space for crew. She would require about 5 tons of ballast. The deck space in superficial measurement would be about 440 feet: deducting one-third for permanent encumbrance, such as hatches, masts, boats, &c., would leave about 300 superficial feet available space for passengers. The 5 tons of ballast would reduce the depth of hold to about 4 feet, and the capacity to 1,000 cubic feet.

The cubic space usually allowed to each passenger in coasting vessels is 72 feet: 1,000 divided by this figure would give the number in hold 14.

The passengers in the hold would not be able to stand upright. Each deck passenger would require a space of 3 feet by 3 feet, equal to 9 feet superficial; 300 feet divided by 9 would give 33 as the number that could be carried on deck, and this could only be done for short distances and in fine weather, as small vessels of this kind have very low bulwarks and no other protection.

The above computation would give the number of passengers that a 15-ton vessel could carry as 47 in all, and with that number I consider that she would be much crowded.

Vessel ought to be fitted with proper skylights and hatches.

Marine Department, Wellington,

30th January, 1879.