

New Britain and New Ireland, and whether measures have been adopted for the investigation of the irregularities reported from that region, and the prevention of their repetition. For its part, the Imperial Government, although similar occurrences in connection with German labour vessels have not been reported to it, intends to subject such ships to a sharp control, by (a system of) visiting the island groups, and for this purpose one of the ships of the Imperial navy will be permanently stationed in those waters during the so-called labour season, from May till the end of September.

This vessel will also be commissioned to afford efficient protection to the legitimate commercial interests of the Germans in New Britain and New Ireland, which have latterly attained importance, and to repel by force violent attacks upon the life and property of Germans. The Imperial Government, in its endeavours to maintain a state of peace and order in the places in question, reckons upon the willing support of the Royal Government of Great Britain, upon which, no less than upon that of the German Empire, it is incumbent to prevent any transgression of the limit which divides the lawful labour traffic of Polynesia from slave-trading, and avert the new element of danger which would thereby be introduced into the already difficult relations that prevail in the South Sea.

In conclusion, I permit myself to enclose herewith, for your Lordship's information, and with the request that it may be returned, an extract from a report of the commander of His Majesty's ship "Carola," upon his experiences in New Britain.

This report corroborates the statement that, in consequence of the behaviour of the labour ships, the life of the white men residing upon the island groups in question is exposed to serious danger, and contains, besides, statistical data respecting the extent of the German commercial interests in those parts.

With, &c.

Baron PLESSSEN.

Sub-Enclosure 2.

Commandant KARCHER to the GERMAN ADMIRALTY.

(Extract from II. 29086.)

Batavia, July 6, 1883.

ACCORDING to my own experience, gained during two stays in New Britain, as well as the report of Lieutenant-Captain Geiseler's observations, the condition of things in those parts seems to be as follows:—

The Trading and Plantation Company, which has its principal establishment in Meoko, has some eighteen small trading stations on the eastern part of New Britain, and on the western coast of New Ireland, of which about ten to twelve are manned; the firm of Hernsheim and Co., which has its principal establishment in Matupi, has two or three stations on New Britain, two on the northern part of New Ireland, and one on each of the islands Laughlan, Anchorite, and Hermit, of which the two last named are not at present occupied, but will be manned as soon as a suitable staff is found.

A source of perpetual danger to the life of the white settlers on these islands consists in the fact that the natives are ignorant of the distinction between various nationalities, and, according to their customs, they seek to avenge a wrong inflicted on them upon the first person in their presence. In this connection the chief danger is provoked, according to the statements of all persons with whom I have spoken, by the behaviour of the labour-recruiting vessels. Implicit reliance cannot, of course, be placed upon information gained from the settlers, who are doubtless apt to make exaggerated statements. If, however, only a part is true of what the Consul there told me, and what has been recounted to me by others, then the labour-recruiting is simply slave-dealing. According to these accounts the captains not only buy the people from the chiefs for firearms, and even breech-loading firearms and ammunition, but entice the people who come alongside in their canoes to barter on board, and then detain them, or they even steal the crew of a canoe which they meet with at sea.

If the labour-recruiting agents performed their inspection properly, under which condition only such labourers should be procured as come of their own accord, and have the nature of the engagement to be entered into explained to them, most vessels would bring back no labourers; the agents, therefore, in most instances, shut their eyes and content themselves with the captain's assurance that the proper course has been followed. It is, however, wholly impossible for a captain really to come to an understanding with the natives, of whose speech he is ignorant, notwithstanding the interpreter who is often taken out with the expedition, for the language is distinct in nearly every one of the small districts, and unintelligible to the inhabitants of another. The interpreters, for the most part, serve merely as decoy-birds to entice the natives on board. It is only natural that in such a state of things small fights occasionally take place, and I have noticed that, in all places where labour ships ply, the natives are far more shy than elsewhere. In Baka, for instance, where the people at once came alongside in great numbers, they fled as one man when a boat was lowered from the ship. Not less significant is, for example, the fact that in Nadub the captain of the "Fanny" was fired on with the very Snider rifles and ammunition which he had sold to the natives a few days previously.

The whites are now in a particularly anxious position, as this year, the labour trade in the New Hebrides not affording a sufficient supply of labourers, a large number of labour-recruiting vessels—above twenty—have come from Queensland to the coasts of New Britain. With the great demand for labourers in Queensland, and the consequent exploitation of these islands, the supply will soon come to a stop, and German interests will be thereby directly injured, since New Britain and New Ireland are the only places whence the Trading and Plantation Company in Samoa can still draw any considerable number of labourers.

To the Head of the Admiralty, Berlin.

The Commandant,  
KARCHER, Captain of Corvette.