

71. Again, the High Commissioner has large powers to make regulations for the government of British subjects in the Western Pacific. The trading community and British subjects in these parts generally, would be ill disposed to acquiesce in these regulations being made by the naval officer in command of the station, and it will, we think, be generally felt that it is more expedient that such regulations, which are, in fact, laws, should be framed and issued by a civil authority, and by a civil authority only.

72. Though the employment as Deputy Commissioner of naval officers exclusively would, no doubt, be an economical measure, it would be one not unattended with objections.

73. It is, we think, of the very greatest importance that all, or nearly all, of the Deputy Commissioners should be permanently resident in the Western Pacific. It is not by a hasty visit of a few hours to this or that island, necessarily deriving all information through whatever white man happens to be there, that a real knowledge of the circumstances of the Western Pacific is to be gained, and, in fact, almost every officer leaves the station before he has gained any such mastery of the situation as to enable him to form any general view by which to guide his action in particular cases. Years of experience and a long-continued residence in the islands will be required to form really efficient Deputy Commissioners. No one who has not had opportunities such as we have ourselves enjoyed of seeing the vast amount of injustice and wrong done (in these regions) with the very best intentions, through ignorance and a hasty misreading of facts, can fully appreciate the gravity and importance of this conclusion.

74. To obtain any power of dealing satisfactorily with the misdeeds of other whites than Englishmen, or of punishing attacks upon them, an international arrangement, having the sanction of a treaty, with France, Germany, and the United States, would be necessary. Such an arrangement would probably involve the substitution for the High Commissioner of a Mixed Commission similar to the old Mixed Commission Slave-Trade Courts, and perhaps also a mixed, or rather a joint, naval police. Such an arrangement would be in many ways most satisfactory, but it must not be forgotten that in all mixed operations, not of a temporary character, but intended to be permanently continued, lie seeds of quarrel. Moreover, it is more than questionable whether all the Powers concerned would consent to be parties to such a treaty.

75. III. The annexation of some of the groups of islands by a civilized Power is also a step the possibility of which should be considered. It is not one which has much to recommend it to the Power making the annexation. A mere nominal assumption of sovereignty would not of course effect the slightest alteration in the existing state of society in the islands. It would not place any additional restraint on white adventurers, nor would it prevent, or make it easier to punish, any murder committed by a native. On the other hand, the institution of an effective control and real government would involve vast expense. But, while there is nothing to make annexation attractive to the annexing Power, it would no doubt be a relief to other Powers to know that a civilized State had made itself responsible for the police and good order of these islands.

76. This question has been forced into unexpected prominence by the recent action of one of the Australian Colonies. The labour trade in the South Seas, and, indeed, the work of the High Commission in every detail, would have been so seriously affected by the annexation of the great island of New Guinea to the Colony of Queensland that, for the somewhat protracted period during which the project was under discussion, we felt compelled to suspend the course of our inquiries.

77. The resolution adopted on this point might have rendered our recommendations so inapplicable that it appeared to us unnecessary to occupy ourselves with labour which circumstances might render wholly useless.

78. We are aware that plausible reasons have been urged in favour of assenting to the wish of the Queensland Government. It may be said that by doing so the Imperial Government would escape any expenditure on the new possession, and avoid all responsibility for its future management. We venture to question both propositions. We do not think it would be found possible to avoid expenditure from the Imperial Treasury; while, as the annexation cannot be effected without the fiat of the Imperial Government, moral responsibility attendant on that act must be incurred by those who grant it.

79. The aborigines of Queensland are of the lowest and most degraded type of savages, nomadic, barbarous, without law, settled habitations, or agriculture. The natives of New Guinea (though varying much from one another in character and appearance) are for the most part of a very different description. They form agricultural communities, they live in large well-built villages, and they cultivate the land, over which they jealously maintain proprietary rights.

80. But, to the Queenslander, the "black fellow" of his own colony may be supposed (very naturally) to furnish the type of a native; and it may be taken for granted that the colonists, in all their dealings, whether public or individual, with the natives of New Guinea, will be influenced by that idea. Moreover, the extension of the boundaries of the colony would imply the extension of its laws, which, with respect to native matters, are (whatever may be the case as regards Australian blacks) singularly unsuited to such a population as that of New Guinea. No right in the soil on the part of the native is recognized; and within the last few years islands inhabited by a race similar to the Papuans of New Guinea have been offered for sale by the Queensland Government under a Proclamation issued in October, 1880, wholly regardless of the fact that they were the homes of a numerous population. Any similar grant by the Queensland Government of lands in New Guinea itself is certain to be resisted, nor could the expropriation of the natives be accomplished without very grave complications.

81. The relations between the white and native populations in Queensland have not been such as to promote sympathy or kindly feeling on either side, nor have they been favourable to a development of that generous and dispassionate spirit in which the government of native races should be undertaken. It is very possible that there may be, and probably is, exaggeration, and even gross exaggeration, in the stories told of brutality and cruelty shown towards natives in Queensland; but