

conclusive against a treaty that it has been approved by public opinion in this country. However, the German Government has apparently decided not to keep up the mystery any longer, and our correspondent at Berlin summarised the treaty or convention—by whichever name it is to be called—in a telegram which we published yesterday. It is not necessary now to rake up the incidents which led to the Samoan crisis. To remember the high-water mark of German activity—to call it by the most respectable name that occurs to us—in Samoa is only material for the purpose of measuring the concessions that Germany has made. Judged by this standard, the treaty bears handsome testimony to the Chancellor's reasonableness in all that concerns German colonial policy. Prince Bismarck, as we all know, is “no colonial man” himself, and his occasional excursions in this direction have been rather forced upon him by national sentiment than undertaken of his own impulse. Still, after the lengths that Germany went in Samoa—deporting the reigning King, giving moral and even active support to her own nominee, and advancing pretensions to an exclusive protectorate over the islands—the complete equilibrium of national interests established by the treaty is much more than we could have expected the Chancellor quietly to consent to. It is true that some of the later specimens of German high-handedness in Samoa were repudiated by Prince Bismarck as the vagaries of officials. But even if we only reckon those acts for which the Imperial Government was clearly responsible it will be evident how much Prince Bismarck surrendered, and with what unflinching decision he reverted to his determination not to complicate his foreign policy with aspirations after a colonial empire. Perhaps the common disaster which befell the German and American squadrons at Apia on the 16th of March last, by sobering the chief parties to the dispute, may have made the Chancellor's retreat an easier matter.

The new status of Samoa may be shortly described as a joint protectorate of Great Britain, Germany, and the United States. The islands are declared neutral territory, in which the citizens and subjects of the three signatory Powers, but not, it may be noticed, of other Powers, have equal rights of residence, trade, and personal protection. Effect has already been given to the first article of the treaty, which makes provision for the restoration of Malietoa. We noticed on a previous occasion the niggardly spirit in which the German authorities performed this act of involuntary justice—putting the poor monarch hurriedly and furtively on shore while his subjects were at church, in order to avoid a demonstration of welcome. Probably a trace of the same reluctance upon the part of Germany to do what has to be done handsomely is to be found in the provision under which Malietoa's reign is made liable to be determined at any time by a unanimous declaration of the three Powers. With this exception, the independence of the natives of Samoa is henceforth fully recognised. They are to elect Malietoa's successor, and be governed in accordance with their own laws and customs. But, of course, the independence of the Samoans does not mean their sovereignty. This is subject to three main reservations. First, so much of the judicial power as is necessary to do justice between foreigner and foreigner, and foreigner and native, is withdrawn from the native Government and intrusted to a Chief Justice, to be named by the three signatories in common accord. Since this functionary will need to be versed both in English, German, American, and Samoan law, the salary of £1,200 a year, which is guaranteed to him by the three Powers, cannot be called excessive. In the second place, the Samoans suffer some technical diminution of territory. Apia, the capital, with a sufficient zone of country round it, is converted into a “municipal district,” or international port, and placed under a “municipal Magistrate.” Next, the native Government is restricted in the important particular of taxation. It is allowed to collect certain specified duties only upon foreign merchandise; but that the task of collection may be rendered easier, Apia is made the only port of entry. Outside the boundary of the municipal district the native administration is unfettered in the imposition of taxes upon property, except that, in order to bind the property of foreigners, such a tax must have the assent of the Consuls of the three Powers.

These fundamental provisions of the treaty are accompanied by others designed to protect the natives against what experience has taught to be the inevitable consequence of free contact with civilisation. Arms and ammunition are no longer to be poured into Samoa to feed the internecine struggles hitherto chronic in these islands. The sale of intoxicating liquor to natives is to be made a penal offence. Land held by Samoans is to be in general incapable of alienation to white men; and a commission of inquiry is to investigate the validity of all alien titles now in existence. It is not, perhaps, too much to assume that these beneficial provisions are in a great measure due to the influence of the British Government; but, however that may be, their appearance in an international compact of such practical importance is a remarkable event in the history of the relations between civilised and semi-civilised races. The treaty must be welcomed above all reasons as settling a difficult and delicate piece of business which at one time came near to being settled in a ruder manner. But it deserves public attention upon other grounds. With such elaboration is it framed—for it fills seven columns and a half of the *Imperial Gazette*—that it might claim to be considered a model arrangement of its kind. It is, at all events, an interesting precedent for the temporary neutralisation of islands similarly conditioned. We do not say that it is above criticism, and perhaps its chief defect is that it says nothing about the strong hand that is to enforce all its excellent provisions. No doubt we shall hear plenty on this score from persons whose knowledge of the islands and the inhabitants enables them to speak with authority on the subject. But, when all is said, the result of the Berlin Conference is creditable to the plenipotentiaries, and especially to Sir Edward Malet, Mr. Scott, and Mr. Crowe, who represented this country. All we wanted in Samoa was a fair field and no favour; and that the treaty appears to give us.

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