

The imports practically all come from New Zealand, and are similar to those of the Cook Islands. The year ending 1919 was the record year for the island, when the imports reached £21,783, including £4,020 in specie, as against £5,580 for 1907, £9,182 for 1910, £11,200 for 1914, and £17,258 for 1918, the principal items being cotton piece-goods, apparel, biscuits, flour, and tobacco.

Complaints were made by traders regarding the bad keeping-quality of New Zealand biscuits, and carelessness in packing. If New Zealand makers wish to retain this trade more care must be exercised in the manufacture of the particular biscuit which is sold under the name of "cabin bread," and the packing must be better.

Most of the re-exports from New Zealand, such as cotton goods, wearing-apparel, &c., are of British manufacture. Owing, however, to war conditions, a certain amount of American-manufactured goods has recently been introduced. When things become normal, in all probability trade will get back to its old channels.

Exports.

It will be seen from the return attached that of the £35,977 exported in 1919 New Zealand's share was £20,904, of which £17,327 was for copra, three-quarters of which was simply transhipped, probably to the United States of America.

Of the total exports, over £31,000 was copra. The year 1919 is hardly a fair year by which to judge the exports, as a considerable quantity of copra had been held over from the previous year owing to the shortage of shipping. In 1919, however, practically all of it was got away from the island. The price last year was high, and no doubt greater industry in collecting the nuts, &c., was thereby encouraged. The total amount shipped was over 1,100 tons, which, as will be seen from the record of exports, was far in excess of any other year since the island came under New Zealand jurisdiction.

The export of hats, which are hand-made from pendenas-leaves, is next in importance, 4,269 dozen having been sent out last year, the total value being £3,367, of which New Zealand took 4,234 dozen, valued at £3,341. Unfortunately, the Natives are not at all keen on the weaving of hats: they consider it too much work for the return they receive. Panama fibre has been introduced into the island, and so far the plants are growing well. Mr. Morris, the Administrator, is at present making inquiries regarding better methods of weaving and the making of more popular shapes. He has also instituted special classes in the school for the study and training of hat and kit making. If the Panama plant is found to do well—as we think it will—and the Natives can be induced to take up the making of Panama hats enthusiastically, a splendid industry may easily be built up, as the prices obtained for Panama hats will be infinitely greater than those obtained for the hat made at present.

Outside copra and hats there is little exported. It is claimed that cotton would grow abundantly if planted, but on the other hand there is the labour difficulty. Cotton necessitates work, and continuous work is not favoured by the Native populations of most of these Pacific isles. The same argument applies to coffee and cocoa.

It is a peculiar fact that Natives work much better out of their own islands, and the Niueans are no exception to the rule. Niue boys are much sought after by planters in other Pacific islands, but we are strongly of opinion that labour contracts for work in other islands should be absolutely prohibited. Moreover, the withdrawal of its manhood has a marked effect on birth-rate, and anything which tends to lessen the birth-rate should be seriously discouraged.

Bananas also are said to grow well, and a certain amount of trade might be developed if a suitable shipping service were inaugurated. Outside hatmaking, which is worthy of the serious attention of the Administrator—and he is alive to its importance—we are of opinion that, in the meantime at least, the full attention of the Native should be centred on coconut-growing. It is no doubt a speculative crop and subject to considerable market fluctuations, but it is a crop which suits the Native temperament.

As only one-sixth of the land is under cultivation there is room for enormous extension. We are pleased to report that the present Administrator encourages the Natives to extend their plantations as much as possible. He instituted an