

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable Arthur William de Brito Savile, Earl of Liverpool, Member of His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Member of the Royal Victorian Order, Knight of Justice of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief in and over His Majesty's Dominion of New Zealand and its Dependencies.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the several matters and things referred to in the Commission, a copy of which is attached hereto, have the honour to submit the following report.

We left Wellington by the "Mokoia" on Tuesday, the 17th day of February last, and visited in rotation Rarotonga, Mangaia, Aitutaki, islands of the Cook Group, Niue, Samoa, Vavau, Nukualofa, and Suva, returning to Auckland by the same steamer on Friday, the 26th March. We took evidence at all places, copy of which is attached hereto [not printed].

QUESTION (a): THE CONDITIONS OF TRADE BETWEEN NEW ZEALAND AND FIJI.

Fiji lies 1,200 miles to the north of New Zealand, and well inside the Tropic of Capricorn. The Group is composed of more than two hundred islands, of which about eighty are inhabited. It has a total area of 7,451 square miles. The principal islands are Viti Levu (Great Fiji), with an area of 3,200 square miles, and Vanua Levu (Great Land), with an area of about 1,800 square miles.

The Group was proclaimed a Crown colony in 1874, its present Governor being Sir Cecil Rodwell. Suva, the capital and chief port for the colony, is on Viti Levu. The modern portion of the town is well and substantially built; the old part, however, with its mixed population, its narrow streets, and foreign-looking shops, reminds one of the East. Viewed from the height behind, whence one looks across the town to the peaceful waters of the lagoon, and on beyond to the white foam fringe which marks the edge of the reef, the scene is one of enchanting beauty.

The larger islands of the Group are extremely fertile, well wooded, and abundantly watered. The River Rewa, in Viti Levu, is navigable for shallow-draught vessels for a distance of about fifty miles.

Suva, which lies in the direct line of route between New Zealand and Vancouver, is almost like a Clapham Junction. The Canadian mail-steamers make it a port of call, and it has a direct steamer service to Sydney, Auckland, Tonga, and Samoa. Its wharfage accommodation is extensive, and well provided with shed accommodation: vessels drawing 30 ft. of water can safely berth alongside.

The Fijians are a happy, contented, and sturdy race, but, like most of the South-Sea-Islanders, they are not very fond of work, especially in their own islands. Away from home they work much better.

They have collectively and individually adopted the Christian religion. The chief religious sects maintain missionary activities in Fiji, and their religious and educational training has been of immense service to the Natives.

The climate of these islands is healthy. It is claimed by some to be the healthiest tropical climate in the world. This happy state of affairs is also claimed for the Cook Islands, for Tonga, and for many other tropical islands. At any rate, Fiji is undoubtedly healthy—there is no malaria, and there is an exceedingly low European death-rate.

The maximum temperature at Suva is about 90° F., and the minimum about 63°. January, February, March, and April are the hottest and wettest months;