

THE KANAKA OF NECAL.

(By Cpl. E. Knowling)

THE natives of this island are mainly of Melanesian origin being characterised by their dark skins and 'chunky' build. They are called Canaques by the French but to their faces they prefer to be known as Indigenes (Natives) or by the more colloquial French term of 'garçon' (boy). The language barrier prevents us from getting to know them well, and there seems to be little authoritative information available, as the French do not appear to encourage any pride in race or tradition. :: THE tribal set up appears to be that of a loose confederation of sub-tribes under a paramount district chief, the 'Grand Chef'. Each sub-tribe has its own chief and his authority apparently depends largely on his personality, as in some cases discipline within the tribe is good. In many cases the minor chiefs are quite young men, and a considerable amount of control is exercised through the heads of families who are consulted in matters of tribal policy. In only one case have I come in contact with any suggestion of taboo and in this case a native man and woman were walking along the road towards a 'Grand Chief'; the man continued and met the chief and, as is usual, went through the routine of hand shaking and cheek kissing. The woman, however, sat down with her face averted some hundred yards away. It seemed that she must not pass in front of a chief. If contact is unavoidable the woman must turn her back and not look the chief's face.. There must be exceptions to this rule, maybe it only applies to strangers for most of the chiefs I have met have been blessed by more than one offspring. :: THE Kanaka attitude to work is typically native; if interested he will work well in short bursts, but continuous routine work does not attract him at all. When employed by the Army he is paid about fifty cents a day and as there is little available for him to buy, the money is little incentive. His food is home grown in his plantations which may be near his home or else miles away in the hills; he is mainly a vegetarian in diet and his only local food purchase is bread, which costs him the equivalent of six pence a loaf. In the earlier stages of the war when invasion seemed imminent so many natives

were at work at camps, etc that the plantations were neglected and the Govt. had to make an issue of rice to feed them. Since then the Gendarmes have supervised the cropping and should a native fail to have enough planted he will be compelled to get to work and grow more. :: TAXES are paid by work on the roads - and fifteen days on the pick and shovel sees him free to look the Tax Dept. in the face. As a result of the combination of home grown food, scarcity of goods to buy and the system of working off taxes the lure of money has not sufficient pull to counter balance the love of leisure encouraged by the climate of the South Pacific Paradise.

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OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

CPL. Ted Knowling - One time respected Auckland accountant, now something of a financial vagrant who is "nipped" between pay days when not scrounging pay books between pays. Speaks French like a Kanaka, acts as interpreter and paymaster in Unit native affairs.

POETESS R.H. Williams of the Waacery, christened H.R. and known by such until she contributed to Dozerdust when R.H. replaced original. A keen Auckland she favours Tunnel scheme in place of Bridge proposal. A mainstay of J.R. McKenzies she thinks firm may be bit wobbly in her absence. Adores Clarke Gable.

STEVIE NASH says he has been every-where but in jail - that doesn't mean he won't. Is too busy writing poems to read posts. Hobby - opening Bluff oysters. By adoption belongs to Wellington which he poetically describes in an epic poem as the "Belchy City".

"CURLY" Griffin our Wharf contributor. A city boy who now chews grass as a probationary period to chewing Spark Plug tobacco. Is chief librarian to Wharf - deplorable absence of highbrow literature, says his readers will look at nothing lower than Shakespeare.

SNOOPER - mystery character of the Pacific; thought to have had a good education in most third rate ports. Attached himself to Dozerdust and adopted Works for duration. Spends most of his time spying on lads.

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