

I.—The Islands
generally.
Mr. Stenroos.

There are very few cocoanut trees upon this island, the natives having cut them down during wars in past years. If planted out again, the place could be made a valuable possession. The harbour is a splendid one for ships of any draught, being a lagoon with two entrances.

Eastward of Penrhyn Island about 400 miles lies an atoll, known as Caroline Island, very low, and about fifteen miles long by five miles broad. It has never, to all appearance, been permanently inhabited. It has been lately reported as containing a great deposit of guano, and it has been sold by one Captain Brothers, of Tahiti, to Messrs. Holder Brothers, of London, for a large sum. In this neighbourhood is Vostock Island, which, though spoken of as doubtful, does exist, and, from its appearance, should be in a great measure covered with guano.

The archipelago of the Marquesas, which have been commonly spoken of as a sort of Paradise by navigators who have visited them, do not, in my opinion, deserve comparison with any of the Society or Samoan Isles, inasmuch their general formation is exceedingly precipitous, and the area of valuable agricultural land which they present for colonization is less in comparison to that which consists of merely sharp ridges and rocky eminences. Nevertheless, weighing well what is to be said for and against them, they present many advantages for settlement. Notably, they possess a most delightful climate, well suited to the European constitution, as is proved by the robust health enjoyed by many aged men (English and American) who are still resident there, having been long domesticated upon them, and who are wonderfully vigorous in spite of the debauchery and kava-drinking to which they are notoriously addicted. Elephantiasis exists here as in Samoa, and appears to be the only truly indigenous disease. In fact, what applies to the Navigator Isles applies equally to the Marquesas; with this difference, that the latter are of a more limited area, and present a much less proportion of land capable of being utilized for agricultural purposes. They have been since 1842 regarded as belonging to France; but I believe that since 1859 that nation has abandoned all claim to them, beyond the right of protecting the Catholic missions there established, and has withdrawn the small garrison which for a time it maintained.

French colonization in Oceania, whether in the Marquesas or elsewhere, does not appear to have produced any useful result. They seem to confine themselves to the building of barracks, an arsenal, a prison for the lodgment of military or political offenders, a landing quay, and some fortifications by the labour of those unfortunates, a customhouse for the levying of exorbitant duties upon necessary importations, a Jesuit mission, and a congeries of low grog-shanties. The whole may be summed up in a few words: "Casernes, conciergerie, bureau maritime, mission, café, salon de billards—voilà tout." The result is indolence, demoralization, stagnation; complaints of oppression on the part of the indigènes, eternal squabbles and intrigues among the officials; expensive public works, in a few years abandoned to irreparable decay; wharves washed away by the sea, gridirons (for shipping) and machinery rusted and disabled, cannon-slides and shot-piles undermined by the land-crabs until they almost disappear under the surface of the soil; churches half erected, then forsaken and overgrown with jungle; and a community of idle, dejected, discontented, absinthe-drinking roués, whose only object in life seems to be to kill the time until the arrival of that year of jubilee which shall bring the welcome transport that shall restore them to La Belle France.

The population of the Marquesas is supposed to be not more than 12,000, of whom about one-half are upon *Dominica* (or *Hivaoa*). This island is the most fertile of the group, if there be any difference in that respect, for the soil of the whole of them is most productive. As Sir Edward Belcher says, "Every inch upon which vegetation can find a hold is covered with it."

Dominica is twenty miles long by about seven miles broad. There are many harbours, but the best is on the north-west, called by whalers *Haunamanu*. Here is a large settlement, as there are considerable ones in every harbour, the island being populous. These people are very handsome, of great stature and fine features, with a very light complexion, but very much tattooed. They are very loose in their morals, and given to drink. They make toddy from the cocoa-palm, and live in a chronic state of muddle. They have muskets, but are civil to strangers, and might be made a good people if they could be kept sober.

There are European beachcombers on the island, who, as a rule, drink very much, and have large families of half-bred children—splendid creatures to look at, but of degraded habits. There are also some Jesuit missionaries, who have not succeeded in converting any one, but have done very well in planting cotton. The whole island is like a great garden gone to waste.

The principal mission in the group is on *Roapoa*, a very beautiful and productive island, not much frequented, but having more than 1,000 inhabitants, living chiefly on the west side, which is not so precipitous as the other, and has much fine sloping land, as well as secure harbours.

Nukuhiva is the main island, and by its name the whole group is known to the other Polynesians. It is about twenty miles long by ten miles broad. Like the others, it is inexhaustibly fertile. It was formerly very populous, but the people have been almost exterminated by drunkenness and war among themselves since the introduction of firearms. There are said to be not more than 2,000 inhabitants remaining. Here, in a bay called *Port Anna Maria*, was the French military establishment, but the buildings are now in ruins, the wharves washed away, and the garrison removed all but some three or four gendarmes and a pilot, and I believe they only remain because they have native wives and do not want to leave them.

Hakau, to the west of *Port Anna Maria*, is a great land-locked harbour with a narrow entrance, only 200 yards wide but very deep. It is one of the most beautiful sites for settlement in the whole world; a man who has seen it once can never forget it. But there is nothing here except all manner of tropical vegetables and fruits growing wild, a village of grass huts, and a couple of hundred debauched and drunken savages.

The *Austral Isles*, which lie southward of the Society group, are especially adapted to European settlement, inasmuch as from their latitude they possess a temperature in which European products are readily acclimatized, together with tropical vegetables. They extend from