

No. 2.

DEAR MR. DOUGLAS,—

Port Moresby, 6th August, 1886.

I thank you for your letter of the 3rd, brought by the Rev. Father Verjus, and delivered to me yesterday by Mr. Musgrave. It is a very clear expression of the views which I and my colleagues hold respecting the relations of the missions. There is not a sentiment in it at variance with my own ideas on the subject. The rule you suggest I accept cordially without any hesitation; it is wise and just, and the only one that will prevent complications and waste of strength.

But a rule of this kind, to be effective, must be accepted by both parties. In the very friendly conference I had to-day with Father Verjus, I found that their orders from Rome override every rule. I contended that their occupation of Yule Island was a thorough infringement of the rule you suggest for our guidance; that it was much too close to our station at Delena; that, the people being one and the same, speaking the same language, coming and going constantly, living sometimes at Delena and sometimes at Yule Island, it was like occupying part of the same village; and that, wherever such close proximity exists, there is a danger of the evils you deprecate. To this the Father replied that their orders from Rome to occupy Yule Island were definite and explicit, and that they must, under any circumstances, obey them. That being the case, discussion is useless, and no rule, however good and wise, can be binding. I am sure no one who is acquainted with the history of the case can question the fact that the Roman Catholic station, just opposite Henere's house at Delena, is far too close for peace and comfort.

But, while they state the impossibility of even considering the question of removal from Yule, they ask us to remove our teacher from Yule Island.

I think you are aware, Sir, that the directors of our society leave the details of work and the entire management of the mission to the resident missionaries, who form a committee. The directors do not impose upon us any orders or instructions that may fetter us in the slightest degree. But at the present time I am quite alone, and I could not take upon myself the responsibility of such an important step without first consulting my colleague, who is in England, and the directors of our society.

At the same time the request seems to me unfair and unreasonable. We do not consider that Yule Island has been abandoned by our Mission. The information you have received respecting the history of our connection with Yule Island is quite correct, but not quite complete. Will you allow me, Sir, to supply the missing link?

After the removal of our teachers in 1876, we had no means of reoccupying it until 1882. In 1881 my colleague, Mr. Chalmers, visited the whole of that district to select sites for houses for teachers who were expected early in 1882. He found Yule Island was deserted by the people; that the chief, Lavao, and many of the people had gone to live at Delena. He put up the teacher's house there; and a few months later Mr. Chalmers, Mrs. Lawes, and myself went to Delena and stayed some time. We visited Yule Island, but with the exception of one old man named Rabiei and his family it was uninhabited. In 1882 Henere came, and we placed him at Delena. He was the Yule Island teacher, and would have been placed there if there had been any people left to work among. Rabiei was hurt that they should be neglected. He had been very kind to the first teachers. We promised him that when the people came back to Yule he should have a teacher. I have never been to Delena since, but the old man has come across to know when he was to have a teacher. The island remained uninhabited until the end of 1884 or early in 1885, when the people began to come back to the island. In March, 1885, I wrote, on behalf of the Mission, for the teacher who is now appointed to Yule, and some time in the course of that year the wood was cut for the teacher's house. It was in fulfilment of an oft-repeated *bona fide* promise. The people gladly built the house, and when I took Ratu the other day they received him most cordially. They told me that they had not quite finished the house, because they were afraid we should deceive them and not keep our promise.

We look upon Yule Island and Delena as being most intimately connected. The chief and owner of the island, whose name it bears, is one of our people, a baptized Christian. The majority of the people at Delena may return to Yule Island at any time. The connection is much closer than between Jane Island, here in Fairfax Harbour, and the village of Port Moresby.

Our Roman Catholic friends at Yule are building their house on our piles; they owe the safety and peacefulness of their lives to our Mission, which Father Verjus frankly admitted. I can but think that if Father Navarre had been acquainted with all the facts of the case his sense of honour would have prevented his occupying Yule Island until he had represented the matter to the authorities at Rome. I expressed to Father Verjus my regret that the interview which he has sought now was not held before they occupied Yule Island.

We recognise fully the right of the Roman Catholic brethren to reside on Yule Island if they deem it honourable and right, and should not think, Sir, of appealing to you on the subject, or making any complaint whatever.

Pending an answer from England on the subject, I do not think there is any fear of complications. I have given the strictest injunctions to the teachers to avoid everything that may be a cause of offence, and the relations between myself and Father Verjus are quite friendly. Thanking you for the interest you have taken in the matter, and for the suggestions so kindly given,

I am, &c.,

The Hon. J. Douglas, C.M.G., Thursday Island.

W. G. LAWES.