

No. 19.

REPORT on the TRADE of the COOK ISLANDS for the YEAR ending 31st December, 1892.

Shipping and Navigation.

THE entries during the year have been (see Table I.); Inwards, 95; tonnage, 17,132: outwards, 93; tonnage, 16,977. The few entries of French vessels noted in the table are of small schooners from Tahiti. The American vessels are small Californian-built schooners trading among the islands of the group and those adjacent, but owned by traders in Rarotonga. The native vessels are owned by Cook Island natives or natives of Penrhyn Island; they are Californian built, and purchased by them for trading among the islands and Tahiti. The movements of the few vessels owned by the Natives have been much more active lately, the entries having increased from three in 1890 to thirty-one in 1892. These vessels do not exceed 40 to 45 tons, and are too small to trade with New Zealand; but the natives of Ngatangia (in Rarotonga) are building a schooner of about 100 tons, which they expect to launch in April, and purpose running to New Zealand.

The monthly mail-service with New Zealand continues to be carried on by the steamer "Richmond." She completes the round voyage to Tahiti in twenty-eight days, calling occasionally at one or other of the Cook Islands on the way. Of late she has called at Rarotonga both on the outward and homeward voyage, but apparently is only to do so in future on the way back from Tahiti to Auckland. The following is the published time-table for 1893:—

Leave Auckland.	Arrive Tahiti.	Arrive Rarotonga.	Arrive Auckland.
January 14 ...	January 27 ...	February 6 ...	February 13
February 17 ...	February 28 ...	March 7 ...	March 16
March 20 ...	March 31 ...	April 7 ...	April 16
April 20 ...	May 1 ...	May 8 ...	May 16
May 20 ...	May 31 ...	June 6 ...	June 15
June 19 ...	June 30 ...	July 7 ...	July 16
July 20 ...	July 31 ...	August 7 ...	August 17
August 21 ...	September 1 ...	September 8 ...	September 17
September 21 ...	October 2 ...	October 6 ...	October 17
October 21 ...	November 2 ...	November 6 ...	November 17
November 20 ...	December 1 ...	December 5 ...	December 16

The only charges levied on vessels frequenting Rarotonga are: Pilotage, \$6 = 18s., for every vessel under and up to 50 tons; \$1 = 3s. for every additional 10 tons. Royalty, \$4 = 12s., payable by every vessel using the harbour at Avarua and Avatiu (Rarotonga). This goes to the owners of the land around, as the harbours have belonged to them from time immemorial. Vessels anchoring outside pay neither pilotage nor royalty unless the services of the pilot be specially requested. The pilot and his boat's crew receive no regular pay, and depend on their receipts for services rendered.

Exports and Imports.

The currency of the Islands is still the Chilian dollar, other South American dollars being all included in the one term. The intrinsic value varies continually, and they can only be exported at considerable loss to any other place than Tahiti, where they also are extensively used, though the legal currency is French money. The practice has always been to calculate this dollar, in account, at 4s., but in actual transactions it passes nominally at 3s. The imports, being entered at their cost in the place whence shipped, and this being usually in pounds sterling, are valued at 4s. to the dollar. The exports, on the other hand, are entered at their local cost, and in their case the dollar is converted at 3s.

The only Federal tax is an import duty of 5 per cent., levied uniformly on all articles imported into the Cook Islands. As the duty is paid in Chilian dollars, it is practically reduced (from the causes above stated), in nearly all cases, to 3½ per cent. The taxes levied by the local Governments in the several islands vary in kind, but are in all cases insignificant in amount.

The exports for the year (see Table II.) were £20,336, against an export for 1891 stated at £21,242. It must be observed that no regular statistics are available for accurate comparison prior to the establishment of a Government in June, 1891. There is, however, no doubt of a very material deficiency in the coffee export last year. This year it promises to be abundant, not only from the very promising condition of the crop, but from its alternating in past years with good and bad yields successively.

The chief exports for the year were: Coffee, £4,827; copra, £7,586; cotton, £2,304; pearl-shell, £2,835; oranges and other fruit, £1,496; limejuice, £818; bêche-de-mer, £337. Included in the exports are pearl-shell, copra, &c., to the value of £4,945 (see Table II.), which are the produce of Penrhyn and other islands not included in the Cook Islands Federation. Of the total exports, there were sent to New Zealand, £17,630; to Tahiti, £2,706. The chief articles sent to Tahiti were: coffee, £1,359; copra, £629; cotton, £625.

So far as the figures for 1891 can be ascertained, there has been during the year 1892 a falling-off in the total export of coffee of not less than £3,500. In cotton the decrease has been about £500. The poor crop of coffee for 1892 will be probably made good by a correspondingly good yield this year; but the low price of cotton makes it hardly worth picking in many cases. Oranges also show a falling-off of nearly £1,000; but copra, limejuice, and other articles, have increased, and reduce the total falling-off in the year's exports to less than £1,000.