

feel that the natives are not being fairly treated by the Government, and that any change would give them a better chance.

What are the desires of the Europeans in regard to Government?—I feel that Sir George has misrepresented the Fiji character altogether. We missionaries have heard of no rising, which is hinted at in the Ordinance, nor are the people likely to think of rising. For one thing, they are held too tight; and for another, they have no organization among the various tribes.

I gather that you do not approve of the Fiji Government system?—I object to it *in toto*. My great reason for favouring federation is with a view of getting done with the communal system. As the people progress this system would gradually die; but the Government is afraid to let it lapse, and accordingly the hold of the Government is made stronger by Ordinances. A Fijian belongs almost entirely to the commune. From the age of sixteen he is taken from his father's control, and he cannot leave the village without permission, while for absenting himself for a few days he can be, and frequently is, imprisoned for six months. His home and its manner of building is determined by the officials, who are on top of each other's heads all over the islands, and lately the Inspectors have gone so far as to range the boys and girls of a village in lines, and call on them to choose their wives and husbands, the natives being afraid to refuse. Permission has been refused to youths over sixteen to attend school, simply because they were wanted in the commune. Thus the village is practically the world of its inhabitants, and freedom amongst the natives is an unknown quantity.

And what is the effect of this on the native character?—It not only affects their character, but also their lives. All are reduced to an absolutely dead level, and ambition is killed, and, with it, frequently even the desire to live. The Indians and Polynesians are allowed to lease land wherever they desire to do so, and to move at will, but not so the Fijians. In the four provinces wherein I laboured from the 1st January to the 30th June, there was a loss to population of 243 by excess of deaths over births. This I attribute largely in the case of adults to the loss of desire to live, through there being no goal for their ambition. The infant mortality is very high among the Fijians, though the villages are well drained and supplied with water. In the coolie villages, where sanitation is unknown, the streets swarm with chubby happy children. It is thought that they should have the power to elect a representative Council, and a petition with this object is now going the rounds. At present the Council is composed of Government officials, who vote as directed, and nominees of the Governor, who are in so hopeless a minority that I wonder they retain their seats. Regarding federation, it is generally thought that Fiji should federate with Australia, and, in my opinion, any attempt to federate with New Zealand would be blocked by Australia. Of course, as with Queensland, we have the black labour question, white workers being an impossibility in the sugar plantations. There is another matter, continued Mr. Slade, to which reference might be made. Practically, the whole of Fiji's import trade comes from Australia. Sydney merchants cater very carefully for our market, and supply such goods as cottons and hardware at 100 per cent. less than we can get them from Auckland. This seems unaccountable in view of the drawback on the re-exported goods.

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