

through each gate, were it not that Mr. Von Nagel, the only European on the island, causes the gates to be broken every time he requires to pass, and threatens them with the terrors of the High Court. In dealing with these disturbers of the peace I have told them distinctly that I claim the landing-places and main roads as Crown land, and that I will survey the same and take possession on behalf of all the people of the island. It would be wise to have the outer boundaries of the six tribes surveyed and definitely fixed while Ngamaru lives, for his life is not a good one, and in the event of his death there would certainly be trouble over the boundaries, and probably bloodshed, as there was twenty-five years ago.

I have already mentioned that there are but eight hundred people on this large island; and, this being so, it will be obvious that under the most favourable circumstances that number of Polynesians could not occupy and cultivate two square miles of their island, and as the Maori population is decreasing rather than increasing it must sooner or later be occupied by Europeans. This might be difficult to compass at present, but it must be brought about, and the survey of the tribal boundaries will afford much useful information on the area and character of the waste lands available for settlement by Europeans.

I have the honour to suggest that a Resident Agent should be appointed for this island with as little delay as possible. It is not necessary that this officer should be paid more than a mere retaining-fee, for he would have but little work to do; but the presence of an agent watching the operations of the island Courts would go far to insure a better administration of justice.

#### *Mauke.*

The original inhabitants of this island and those of Mitiaro were killed off about the year 1820 by a raid of the Atiu warriors, and since that date each island has been held by a garrison, who occupy as the representatives of the whole tribe. My last visit to Mauke was in October, 1891, when on my way to Penrhyn and the northern islands, and was caused by the fact that I had received complaints from a Chinaman and others reflecting on the administration of the law by the native Magistrate. This man, like all the officials of Mauke, was from the first utterly corrupt and unfit for his position, but there was no choice. The chief matter of complaint against him on this occasion was his decision in a case in which a Chinaman asserted that he had been robbed of copra to the value of £6. A young native was summoned before the Court and convicted of the offence, and was ordered to pay the sum of 7s. 6d., of which sum the Judge offered the Chinaman 5s. as compensation for his loss. In this instance it was necessary to make the people understand that offenders must be adequately punished, and the Judge held responsible, for there could be no doubt that the authorities were trying to protect the offender. Under these circumstances I dismissed the Judge, and have ordered his successor and the other chiefs of the island to make good the copra stolen, or pay for it, on the ground that they must have known full well who had aided and abetted the thieves and benefited by the theft, and therefore were not themselves guiltless.

This island is too small to warrant me recommending that a Government Agent should be stationed here, but I am none the less aware that the Court will never be conducted with decency or probity until the law is administered by a European.

The men of Mauke are of the same turbulent character as those of Atiu, and it is only nine years since Ngamaru found it necessary to disarm the whole population as a matter of precaution, and there can be no doubt that it was a wise act, for the men can now do nothing but talk.

Mauke is a marvellously fertile island, for in value and extent the produce exported is greater than that of Atiu; but the limit of production has not nearly been reached, for here also the "makatea," or coral zone, remains unplanted. The value of a South Sea island can hardly be calculated by reference to the surface area, for the warm damp climate develops such active growth that Mauke may fairly be regarded as equal to forty square miles of the best land in New Zealand. The gross annual value of good land ought not to be less than £10, whether that land be planted with cocoanuts, oranges, and bananas, or with the orange, banana, vanilla, and coffee.

#### *Mitiaro.*

This island is a good instance of an elevated coral reef thinly coated with sand and gravel of the same material. The surface is not more than 6 ft. above high-water mark, and on those rare occasions when the group is visited by a hurricane there is but one spot on which the inhabitants can find safety, for on such occasions the sea breaks right across the island, and it is said that about thirty years ago two persons who failed to reach the high ground were drowned.

Copra is the only article of regular export; but in the centre of the island there is a fertile patch whereon oranges and bananas are grown with moderate success. The people live almost entirely on cocoanut and fish, and their appearance is such as to justify the Polynesian belief that no better food can be obtained for man. A few oranges are occasionally exported, but the wants of the inhabitants are supplied by the sale of some 30 tons of copra per annum, which might easily be made 100 tons, or even more, were it not that the fatal apathy of Polynesia prevails, and the people are contented with the usual hand-to-mouth existence. Throughout the eastern Pacific it will be noticed that all the cocoa-palms are of from sixty to eighty years' growth. Young trees may be seen of from two to five years, but half-grown trees seldom, if ever. The result of this neglect is that in the event of a real hurricane all of the old and partially worn-out trees would be uprooted, and many of the islands would have no export worth mentioning for the ensuing ten years.

#### *Takutea.*

This island is uninhabited, but belongs to the tribes of Atiu, who visit it for a few weeks in each year in order to make copra. It is one of the coral islands, but moderately fertile, and in European hands might well produce 100 tons per annum, but in the hands of the Atiuans, who have already more land than they can manage, the utmost production will be 15 tons of copra.