

No. 60.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 11th September, 1905.

No. 54.

In reply to your letter No. 249, of the 30th ultimo, I have the honour to report that the concession offered by the managing director of the Union Company will probably bring us more visitors during eight months of the year than we can accommodate. The place is now full. We can, however, build a four-roomed cottage of wood for men if necessary, and do it cheaply.

I cannot say that I think that a fortnightly line of steamers will pay. The returns from oranges this year have been so bad that the producers may at any moment refuse to export. I question if shippers have received a net return of 5s. a ton if we take the whole year through; until lately we have had actual losses. How can oranges pay when we have thousands of boxes of French fruit competing against us, and twelve hundred cases of oranges a week from Sydney sent to Dunedin? It is for this reason that I find it impossible to give any guarantee as to shipments of fruit by a fortnightly steamer. It appears to me that, judging from the prices obtained, we are already overshipping to New Zealand, and that so long as we are exposed to the competition of the whole Pacific it is unsafe to reckon on large exports. The general opinion seems to be that we have planted too many bananas, and that shippers will burn their fingers within the next year or so.

I suggest for your consideration that it will not be wise under present circumstances to make any engagement as to quantities until we find that there is some remuneration for the fruit exported.

I have, &c.,

W. E. GUDGEON,

Resident Commissioner.

The Hon. C. H. Mills, Minister administering the Islands, Wellington.

No. 61.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 11th September, 1905.

No. 57.

In reply to your letter No. 252, of the 31st ultimo, I have the honour to report that of old the land was held to be the property of the Ariki or "Tutara"—that is, of all those independent landholders who held lands for the benefit of the tribes or sub-tribes who lived under their mana. So far as can now be ascertained, this Arikiship or Tutaraship was purely elective, and the position was, as a rule, placed in the hands of the most capable man in the reigning family, irrespective of seniority; but he was at best merely regarded as their chief for the time being, and as having only a life interest in the lands of the tribe. An Ariki Tutara had, however, this privilege: he could make absolute gifts of unoccupied land to members of his own family—that is, to the Rangatiras—and by this act of gift they in turn became Tutaras over the land so given, and were relieved of all obligations to the Ariki other than that of building and repairing his house and perhaps a few other minor obligations.

During the last fifty years it has been the aim of the Arikis—but not of the Tutaras generally—to lessen the power of the members of their own family and put others in their place, in order that the powers of the Ariki might be upheld by men whose position depended on the support of the Ariki.

Of old it was held that those who held land under the Ariki could not be dispossessed of the land so held except for the offence of *akateitei* (denying the right or mana of the Ariki), a very salutary rule that finds expression in our laws—viz., that the tenant may not dispute the right of his landlord.

I believe that I have in my decision followed closely the old laws of this island, and I have some reason for this belief inasmuch as Makea herself, who represents all that there is of autocracy in these islands, has adopted my view of the case, and voluntarily awarded two and a half miles of coast to her people on the terms approved by the Court.

The result is that the people are pleased, and Makea is satisfied in every respect. For my own part I am more than pleased, for justice has been done without injury to the susceptibilities of the Native chiefs. The right of the governing-power has been recognised, and the tillers of the soil have now security of tenure.

I have &c.,

W. E. GUDGEON,

Resident Commissioner.

The Hon. C. H. Mills, Minister administering the Islands, Wellington.

No. 62.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 11th September, 1905.

No. 56.

In reply to your letter No. 248, of the 30th ultimo, I have the honour to report that the present method of dealing with waste or unoccupied lands within these islands is not only bad, but inefficient; in fact, there is no method, properly speaking.

Any person visiting this Group must come here and lose both time and money in looking for land from the Native owners. He may not be able to obtain the 50 acres which is the minimum quantity of land for a man with some capital, and owing to some fault of manner, or even personal appearance, a man who would become a valuable settler may not be able to obtain any land on lease.