

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ON THE TROVE WEBSITE RELATING TO THE POLYNESIAN LABOR DEBATE

The Courier, Friday 21 August 1863, page 2

In the Legislative Assembly yesterday, in answer to questions, ministers stated that it was the intention of the government to reserve from non-competitive sale the land immediately on each side of the line of railway authorised to be made; that the government did not at present intend to introduce a bill to alter the constitution of the Legislative Council; that it was the intention of the government to improve the navigation of the river between Brisbane and Ipswich, so soon as the money was provided; and that the agreement made with the South Sea Islanders to work in Queensland would be laid on the table of the house without delay. The Colonial Treasurer obtained leave to introduce a bill to amend the Impounding laws. The amendments of the Legislative Council on the Scab Bill were considered in committee, and the bill was reported as agreed to with amendments.

The Courier, 21 August 1863, page 3

THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS.

Mr. PUGH asked the Colonial Secretary—1. Whether any correspondence has passed between the government and the owner or agents of the "Don Juan," relative to the South Sea Islanders just brought hither by that vessel? 2. Whether the government are in possession of a copy of the form of agreement said to have been entered into by these people? 3. Whether the government have any objection to lay such correspondence and copy of the agreement before this house, should it be in their power so to do?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY, in reply, stated that the government would, without delay, lay upon the table of the house the agreement referred to by the hon. member, together with other correspondence on the subject.

The Courier, Saturday 22 August 1863, page 4

THE SLAVE TRADE IN QUEENSLAND.

Under this heading the North Australian of August 20, has the following remarks:— We observe in the parliamentary proceedings in the Assembly of Tuesday last, the following mysterious dialogue. "Mr. Pugh, seeing the Colonial Secretary in his place, would ask him, without previous notice, whether the South Sea Islanders lately arrived in the Don Juan, who were to be employed on Captain Towns' plantation, had been kidnapped in the manner adopted by the Peruvian vessels." "The Colonial Secretary said he made inquiry into the matter, and had been informed that they had come under distinctly signed contracts to work for one year, and then to be returned from whence they came." We say mysterious, because that was the first time we were made aware that the Slave Trade had commenced in Queensland, the

repudiation of the Colonial Secretary to the contrary notwithstanding. Wishing to be enlightened on the subject we referred to our files of the Courier, and there find recorded the following:—

"August 15.—Don Juan, schooner, 100tons, Captain— — —, from Sydney."

That is all; even the Captain was palpably so ashamed of the whole affair, that he has managed to have his name suppressed, whilst the cargo of miserable wretches are not even alluded to. We would ask any one acquainted with the usual manner of reporting vessels, whether the whole affair is not palpably rank, and stinks to heaven. We shall investigate this matter thoroughly; and Mr. Pugh should not have sat down apparently satisfied with the reply of the Colonial Secretary which he must have known—to use a mild term—was but bunkum, used to shield a friend. We shall not be satisfied until some member of the house obtains a select committee to sift the matter to the bottom, so that we may know the circumstances under which traffic in human flesh is being carried on. Call it what you will, it simply resolves itself into a branch of the Peruvian slave trade under a milder name. We perfectly remember that Mr. Benjamin Boyd deluged the colony of New South Wales with South Sea Islanders, to the horror and disgust of the colonists. A law was then passed, which is still in force withdrawing all pagans from the hereperation of the Masters' and Servants' Act that had the desired effect, for so soon as the deluded Islanders became acquainted with their legal rights they deserted wholesale, and the result was they were obliged to be sent back from whence they came. This is a very serious subject, and one in which the colony is deeply interested. As by the answer of Mr. Herbert to Mr. Pugh it is clear that the government are winking at the disgraceful transaction; it behoves the people's representatives, therefore, to be up and doing, to suppress this traffic in its infancy. It is a crying disgrace upon the colony, and can only bring a curse with it; no reason can be urged for such an unnatural proceeding when hundreds of thousands of our fellow countrymen are starving at home — — seeking employment and cannot find it.

The Courier, Monday 24 August 1863, page 2

Slave trade in Queensland

(To the Editor of the Courier)

SIR, - Under the above heading I find a paragraph in the North Australian, in which the writer is pleased to indulge in some remarks relative to Captain Towns' recent importation of South Sea Islanders, which I must beg you will allow me space to reply to, more especially as you have inserted the said paragraph in your issue of to-day, thereby, of course, giving still greater currency to the gross, and perhaps wilful misrepresentations it contains. I should not have thought it worth while to reply, but I believe, in consequence of the unwarranted assertions in the local press, the prevailing idea in the public mind is that these natives have been kidnapped.

The announcement of the Don Juan's arrival was no doubt incorrectly stated, and the information meagre in the extreme: with whom the fault rested I shall presently show. In reference to this the North Australian says: "Even the captain was so ashamed of the whole affair that he has managed to have his name suppressed, whilst the cargo of miserable wretches are not even alluded to. We would ask anyone acquainted with the usual manner of reporting vessels whether the whole affair is not palpably rank and stinks to heaven. I must say the language is decidedly original and beautifully descriptive. I hope the ill-favor of the thoughts, words, and deeds of the composer of that paragraph may not reach such an attitude.

The circumstances connected with the Don Juan's arrival are simply these:- The vessel anchored at the bar on Friday, the 14th instant, at 9 p.m. The following morning the captain hoisted his number and the flag for the Health Officer. These were answered from the lightship, and no further notice was taken of him, nor questions asked. I suppose, as the vessel was a regular trader for some years between this port and Sydney, the people on board the lightship took it for granted she was from Sydney. The captain was anxiously expecting the Health Officer all Saturday, and at last on Sunday, at 2 p.m., he pulled up to Lytton, accompanied by Mr. Pilot Wyhorn. Of course, as the ship had not been passed by Dr. Hobbs, he could neither land nor send any letter up, so he shouted from the boat to one of the Customs' men, to request Mr. Macdonald to forward the intelligence of his arrival to Brisbane, telling him that the vessel was from the South Sea Islands, with natives. I may mention, the proper signals were also hoisted when the vessel was off the pilot station, at Cape Moreton.

As to the captain suppressing his name, the idea is really too absurd to notice, and how any man in his sane senses can write such bosh I cannot make out; however, I suppose he either forgot it or did not think it necessary, having shouted from the boat everything else. Even if he had, it is very certain that the newspapers would have spelt it wrong, being rather an uncommon name. This omission was remedied on his arrival in town, when the vessel was properly entered, and the cargo of "miserable wretches" duly reported at the Custom House and Shipping Office, and their names given in as well. Every particular that could be of any public interest was also furnished by the captain to both papers.

Is it not "palpably rank" that a newspaper writer should sit down and deliberately pen such gross charges, without taking the slightest trouble to ascertain whether they were correct or not?

A copy of Captain Towns' instructions to the master of the vessel and the interpreter, also his letter to the missionaries, and the form of agreement with the natives. I have handed to the Hon. The Colonial Secretary, who, in reply to the questions of Theophilus P. Pugh, Esq., M.L.A., has laid them on the table of the house.

I must not trespass too much upon your space. I would just take notice of the concluding portion of the paragraph under review – about its being a crying disgrace,

&c, &c., &c. I can only say that I believe such men as Captain Towns are likely to be of more use to the “starving thousands” at home than the editor of the North Australian and Theophilus P. Pugh, Esq. M.L.A. I think his offer to bring fifty Lanchashire families out at his own expense, and his munificent donation to the Relief Fund (which may still be in the recollection of some of your readers) may be considered sufficient evidence that he is as mindful of the necessities of the poor people at home as all these pseudo-patriots.

I believe were Captain Towns in Brisbane he would treat the affair as it deserves, with silent contempt; but being absent, I hardly think it fair he should be loaded with unlimited abuse without any chance to reply. I am afraid Captain Towns has the bad taste not to take in that highly respectably journal the North Australian, so I sent him by last mail a copy of Thursday’s paper, to show that he has been honored not only with a passing notice, but even a leading article. The latter unfortunately I have not read.

In conclusion, I would say that the law of Queensland, as it at present stands, enables any capitalist to import and employ what labor he pleases. How will Captain Towns be deterred from getting as many of these islanders as he likes, though he incur the risk of the heavy displeasure of Theophilus P. Pugh, Esq, M.L.A., and the thunders of the North Australian.

So anxious were these native to come, when the matter was properly explained to them, that the captain had literally to drive about 130 of them on shore again. Proper huts for them, and a large room to mess in, have been erected on the plantation; and if Theophilus P. Pugh, Esq., M.L.A. wants to prevent the importation of these people, let him bring in a bill, and see if he can get it carried.

Yours obediently.

W.H. Palmer

South Brisbane, August 22.

The Courier, Friday 28 August 1863, page 2

SLAVE TRADE IN QUEENSLAND

(To the Editor of the Courier)

SIR – Will you allow me to inform your readers, in reply to queries, that these islanders are all free men brought here of their own free will for a specific purpose, and under specific conditions which they perfectly understand, at the end of their time to be returned from whence they came. In fact, they are just hired for twelve months. “British subjects” they are too – “fellow colonists”.

I see a few sentences strung together in the North Australian in reply to my letter; but I can’t see that they mean anything particular.

I shall trouble you with no more letters on the "Slave Trade." It is with reluctance I have written what I have.

Yours very obediently.

W.H. Palmer

South Brisbane, August 26

Empire, Thursday 3 September 1863, page 8

THE HONORABLE ROBERT TOWNS, M.L.C. SYDNEY, TO THE HONORABLE R.G.W. HERBERT, ESQ, COLONIAL SECRETARY, QUEENSLAND

SIR – My attention has been called to the report of certain proceedings in the Assembly, in reference to the introduction of a number of natives from the South Sea Islanders, by the schooner Don Juan, for special service at my cotton plantation at the Logan.

The remarks in some of the newspapers to which this matter has given rise, I would, as I usually do, have treated with the silent contempt they merit; but the proceedings in this case, in which you have been called upon in your official place in Parliament to answer questions on a subject in which I am alone responsible, seem to me to be out of the ordinary course, and compel me in justice to you, as well as to myself, to state clearly the principle on which I have acted.

It maybe in your recollection that at the time when so much anxiety prevailed for the growth of cotton in Queensland with the view to the development of a new industrial resource on the colony, as well as to supply the want of raw material under which the Lancashire operatives were suffering so much, I applied for, and took up a maximum grant of cotton land – upon this speculation I have spent upwards of six thousand pounds without, as yet, any return.

It is true that the season has been much against the experiment, but the question of labour has had much more to do with this result, and has induced me to embark in the present South Sea Island immigration.

In the meanwhile I had engaged the service of a number of Germans, imported under the regulations and at the expense of the colony. These men, led away by the bad advice of their countrymen and others, who, on their arrival, persuaded them that they were working for wages below the current rates, became so discontented that they either bolted, or rendered their services almost worse than useless, so that my agent was glad to give up all claim to the fellows, whose laziness, combined with their large ration consuming and useless family, (for your laws do not seem to reach the wives and children) would have soon ruined the whole enterprise.

Observing that others similarly engaged in the cotton experiment were, like myself, suffering from the effects of European labour, I came to the conclusion that cotton

growing upon a large scale either must be abandoned in Queensland, or be carried out by cheaper labour.

It will be in your recollection that the Legislature took the necessary steps to encourage Coolie labour from India; availing of this, I despatched a ship to Madras and Calcutta, to carry it out, but the scheme failed, from the unwillingness of the Indian Government to extend the facilities for drawing away the labour from the vast public works now being carried out in that empire, - such at least was alleged as the reason, though, possibly, jealousy of our entering the lists as competitors with them in cotton growing was not without its influence.

Thus baffled in the proposed Indian Coolie immigration, I turned my attention to a class of people, to whom I am no stranger – the South Sea Islanders.

I have for many years been engaged in trade amongst these so-called “savages,” and have had many hundreds of them in my employ, both on shore and on board ship, and found them an industrious, trustable, and inoffensive race. I have always placed confidence in them, and they have, I believe, the greatest confidence in me and in my fulfilling the engagements I make with them, spending as I do many thousand annually amongst them in their own islands.

For the greater part of the work on a cotton plantation, I believe these Islanders will be found well suited; and instead of being attacked and branded in the way I have been, I think I deserve the thanks of the community for the introduction of that kind of labour which is suited to our wants, and which may save us from the inhumanity of driving to the exposed labour of field work, the less tropically hardy European women and children, for I suppose the most thorough advocate for European labour will admit, that in cotton clearing and picking, they, as well as the men, must take part in the labour.

Apart from the outburst of angry feeling and the senseless howl with which the Don Juan’s arrival has been greeted, I feel confident I have the good wishes of the employers of labour by substituting this native labour, for the generous (!) pale faces who have been brought out at the expense of the country, who delight in scheming about rather than in honest working, and who feel insulted if you offer them for a day’s work that which they have been accustomed to receive at home for a week’s labour.

It is these drones in the hive of industry, whom I call the “breeches pocket patriots,” who first drove me to the employment of native labour, and it is these men, or others pandering to their feelings and passions, who after putting the colony to so much expense for their own passage, and having done little or nothing to repay it, now seek to raise an outcry against those who cost the colony nothing for their passage, and who, I venture to predict, will leave a lasting benefit behind them.

The questions of any species of slavery or kidnapping of these natives is at once confused by the instructions to the captain of the vessels or the interpreter, and my letter to the missionaries, which I append hereto.

The men thoroughly understand the nature of their contract, both as to their treatment and wages here, and as to my returning them to their own country when their time (which you will observe is only for one year) shall have expired.

It is my intention to preserve in the attempt to grow cotton with this kind of labour, on short agreements; and if the men like the work and country, to try to persuade them to bring their wives with them.

As to the danger expressed by some of the newspaper scribblers, lest the Government be put to enormous expense in the additional police required to keep those "barbarians" in order, I venture to predict that there will be less crime amongst them, if not interfered with by these agitators, than amongst an equal number of European labourers from whatever country they may have been drawn at the public expense.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant.

R. Towns.
Sydney, August 31st, 1863.

The Courier, Tuesday 22 September 1863, page 2

IMPORTATION OF SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS INTO QUEENSLAND.

(From the Melbourne Age.)

It seems that Australia will be no longer able to upbraid Peru for her current mal-practices with unsophisticated South Sea Islanders. The odious traffic begun by the speculators of Lima and Callao, is, shame to say, exciting emulation in one of these British colonies, and an enterprising capitalist of Queensland is so bitten with the beauties of the experiment that he has just introduced a shipload of insular aborigines for his "cotton plantation on the Logan River." The Brisbane Courier tells us that the ship Don Juan recently arrived with sixty-seven savages from the New Hebrides, consigned to Captain Town; and now that the "ice has been broken" in that quarter, we may expect that other planters will be ready to follow the example. Of course those imports are not "slaves," any more than the islanders consigned to Peru! The enterprising Captain Towns would be as much horrified as his prototypes in Callao at the scandalous imputation. Precisely the same story is paraded as a cloak in both cases. They are merely "apprentices" for a certain period, nothing more; they are to receive wages as free laborers – to the exorbitant amount of 10s. a month; and they – those savages from the New Hebrides, amongst the most primitive and unsophisticated of all the natives of the Pacific – have signed letters of

agreement binding them to labor in Queensland for twelve months! In a word, there is not a shade of difference between this Australian speculation and the Peruvian one which has created such a furore. There is the same promise of wages, the same impudent burlesque of a legal agreement, and the same affectation of only hiring laborers, when everybody knows that those people have no inducement to leave their islands as laborers, and that they are perfectly incapable of what we call labor. Everyone knows that when a cargo of those people are procured for any such object they must either be got on board ship by force, or else seduced on board by false pretences. They have never worked, in our acceptation of the term, for nature in their country spontaneously, or with the slenderest aid, satisfies their wants, and so when set to work they speedily sink under it. We hear that the great majority of the Polynesians thus brought to Peru have already died off; but what of that – their masters are prepared to supply their places and push the nefarious experiment further. If these new slave dealers must have colored laborers for their plantations, why do they not go in search of coolies? The coolies of Calcutta and Hong Kong are accustomed to toil and not unwilling to emigrate. They would have no more objection to hire with the planters of Queensland and Peru than they have to go to those of Guiana or the Mauritius, if they could obtain from them equal guarantees of faith being preserved. The reason they are not looked for is plain enough; they would require to be treated as free laborers, and not as slaves; they would have to be paid; they should be let go at the fixed termination of their service, and be otherwise honestly dealt with; and if these conditions were not complied with, no more of their countrymen would be forthcoming.

Even in a pecuniary point of view, it is almost certain that the infamous scheme will not be found to answer. Fifteen hundred Polynesians, up to the last dates, have been sold in Peru, and they are now nearly all dead. And so, as the attempt is failing of itself, the Government in Lima, which would not interfere before, is at last going through the form of imprisoning a couple of the principal movers, and a report has been circulated that the traffic has reached a close. But it would really seem that all this is only a ruse to lull foreign action, for it is mentioned, on good authority, that the kidnapping vessels from Peru and Chili are still busily at work among the islands, and that the planters have not abandoned the hope of finally succeeding in their experiment. They remember the enormous mortality which attended the introduction of the far hardier negro into America and the West Indies – how an average of 25 per cent, used to die on the passage, and 20 per cent more in the “seasoning,” after landing; and they calculate that, by perseverance, they will be able to get a fraction of live bondsmen from those shiploads of miserable Polynesians. But whether they would succeed in their aim or not, it is quite certain that, if they are permitted to pursue it, the inhabitants of the majority of those archipelagos will ere long be wholly swept away. Now that sufficient time has elapsed for the British Government to be fully apprised of what is going on, we may expect that proper steps will be taken to suppress a slave trade which is even more revolting in its features, because entailing a more wholesale loss of life, than that watched by our cruisers on the coast of Guinea. And, if the Queensland Government is willing to disgrace itself by suffering those Peruvian practices to be imitated by some of its own colonists, we may safely say that the Imperial authorities will have

the hearty approbation of the colony of Victoria, at any rate, in bringing Queensland to a better sense of her position and duty as a British settlement. Since the Felony Act of 1811 no resident within British dominions has dared to participate openly in a slave trade; and since the Emancipation Act of 1834, purchased with twenty millions of money, no dependency of the British Crown has presumed to revive the institution of slavery. It is not likely, therefore, that England will permit this new attempt to restore the one or the other, on however limited a scale, in whatever disguise, and in however remote a colony. The Queensland Cabinet and Parliament would exhibit discretion, therefore, and a becoming sense of decency and humanity, in promptly dealing with the affair, and not delaying for the interference of Downing-street.

The Sydney Morning Herald, Monday 28 September 1868 page 3

POLYNESIAN LABOUR IN QUEENSLAND

To the Editor of the Herald

SIR, - The question of continuing to import labourers from the South Sea Islands to develop the resources of Queensland is exciting much discussion. The want of cheap labour for the pastoral districts, the desire to form cotton and sugar plantation, and the large tracts of land to be cleared for these purposes are urged as reasons why cheap labour should be procured, and labourers who can be bound to their masters for a term of years.

The impressions here recorded have been produced by interviews with some of the Polynesian labourers engaged in plantation work and with islanders found in Brisbane and the neighbourhood of Ipswich.

The groups of islands from whence the labourers have been brought to Queensland do not possess very large populations, and the mixed tribes working on several stations show that the recruiting has spread over a considerable number of Islands. On many of these islands there are no missionaries, no white men, and the islanders have been looked upon as savages; so that it is difficult to understand how such people have been made to comprehend the conditions on which they have been induced to come to Queensland.

The natives of Mare (about twenty-one out of the fifty islanders working on a large sugar plantation) say "their work is very hard, and their clothing insufficient." They begin work at half-past 6 o'clock a.m., and continue to labour until half-past 5 in the evening. They are allowed an hour in the middle of the day for dinner. They are lodged in one large shed about 70 feet long and 25 or 30 feet wide. They are employed, under European supervision, in preparing the land for the sugar cane. They use the spade, the pick, and the axe. They are without shoes, and the bare foot is used to force the spade into the ground. There should surely be something to protect the feet of the labourer engaged in spade work.

The Government scale of allowance for clothing is inadequate, for if an islander keeps a shirt and pair of trousers for Sunday wear, the kind of labour in which many of them are employed will soon destroy the pair of trousers and shirt which are reserved for daily use for 12 months. The islanders we saw were some of them almost naked, and looked worse than they do on their own islands, for a girdle of leaves does afford some protection, and gives a more respectable appearance to a South Sea islander than an old shirt, as the whole of a labourer's dress in a civilized country.

The islanders, from partially Christianised groups, say they have no time for reading except on Sundays. Many of them appeared very young. They all say they had no idea of the sort of life they were coming to when they left their own lands, and they declared that when their term of labour expired they should return with gladness, and would not again venture upon a second engagement.

The Mare me, in the neighbourhood of Ipswich, declare that they were told on board ship before they left the islands, that they were to serve for *one year* only, and that they would have plenty of food and clothing, but when they arrived in Moreton Bay then they were informed that they were engaged for three years. This was a deception; and had they understood that they were to be thirty-six moon sin Queensland, they would neve have left home.

Five Islanders from a station not far from Brisbane, left their employment, and they were wandering about the streets. These stated that they had given up work because they did not get enough to eat, and that they had not sufficient clothing. These men had been before the Immigration Agent, and their case investigated, and the impression of that officer was that the labourers had no just ground of complaint; but these men said in reply to the statement, that they had received two or three days' rations and consumed them in one day. Sir, that may be true, but hunger was so sharp they had been driven to do so; and they also remarked, if we work hard our stomachs should not be measured, and when we have consumed all our food told to go away – we should go without for a day or two. These men declared they only came for a year. They complain of the treatment they receive from *white* men. They were looked down upon as inferior beings. They said, too, our skins are *black*, but our feelings are like those of *white people*. They are discouraged in working from month to month without receiving any of their wages. Could they have their wages at certain short intervals, and have these wages paid over to a third party on their behalf, they would be more contented. Three years seem a very long time to wait for pay day.

In urging these natives to return to their master, whom they had served for thirteen months, they declared they would rather go to prison than resume their work. Their idea was it would be much better for them to be their own masters, and get 2s. a day in and around Brisbane, than to be bound for three years for 2s 6d. per week and see no wages until their term of engagement had expired. They complain of being misunderstood, and that when they come before the magistrate or

Government officer they are filled with fear, and scarcely know what is the right thing to say.

It is evident that in most cases the labourer will not be any better, morally or intellectually, for the change. Many of them soon learn the bad habits of Europeans – to drink when they can get spirituous liquors, and to swear. They are deprived of the means of instruction – and even if a teacher could be found their languages are so diversified it would be a hopeless task.

The demand for labourers will lead men to visit the islands and secure a cargo by any and every means in their power. It appears that already very questionable means have been employed, and the islanders have been induced to come under false pretences.

Who is to test the worth of the agreements when the strange motley groups of islanders are mustered! Who is to stand up for the right treatment of the strangers! Humane masters may wish to do what is just but is it not well known that these islanders fall into the hands of overseers and servants who think the only way to keep the “niggers” in order is a free exhibition of the revolver and a liberal administration of the stock whip, with a good supply of irons.

Were this traffic in human beings in the hands of honourable men (if such could be found to engage in it) it would soon appear a difficult thing to get a ship load of natives to leave their homes for three years, work hard every day, and at the end of their term receive the sum of £18 each.

These islanders will soon learn that they have bound themselves to a slavery of three years through ignorance, and when they understand the current rate of wages paid to station hands, nothing but discontent will be experienced.

The defects of the “Polynesian Labourers’ Act” are many, and will at an early date force themselves upon the Queensland Government. There is no proper inspection of the islanders – no adequate medical attendance. The labourers may be subjected to rough surgery and worse medical treatment in times of sickness. The transference of labourers from one master to another is often done without much consideration of the *will* of the islander, and the reconveyance of these people to their respective islands will be a matter of difficulty, unless proper persons are appointed to see the law carried out.

There are in Queensland, no doubt, gentlemen who think this South Sea Island labour may be made available for their plantations and stations, and who would not sanction a wrong thing; but it is a very serious question with those who take a wider view of the worth of these islanders than as so many human machines, to do a certain amount of physical labour at the smallest cost. The islanders in Western Polynesia, on some groups, are in a transition state, and it is far better for the moral, spiritual, and intellectual advancement of these people that they remain on their own islands and develop their own resources and trade with foreign nations, as

opportunity presents, than to remove them now and cut them off from teachers and home and family influences, and bind them for three years to a system which looks very much like slavery in many of its aspects.

The influence of removal upon islanders, never under the teachings of missionaries or affected by civilising powers, yet remains to be seen; but if Tanna is a criterion, we see how in their case the worst vices of foreigner have been grafted on the native character, and the Tannese, who have had a good deal of intercourse with a certain class of Europeans, seem to be in a worse condition for moral and spiritual enterprise than they were thirty years ago.

If the South Sea Islands are to furnish labourers to meet the demands which the projected cotton and sugar plantations in Queensland, Fiji, and Tahiti are to make, we see serious evils in the future prospects of these lands. The French authorities will no doubt protect the people over whom they claim authority, but the islands in the New Hebrides will be injured for generations to come should this traffic be carried on. These are the impressions made upon one who has had some experience of South Sea Island life, and worked for the moral, intellectual, and spiritual welfare of some of these islanders.

The present rage in Queensland, Fiji, and Tahiti, for this *cheap* labour must be regarded with anxiety, and be carefully watched. It is such an easy thing to be blinded by self-interest, and to imagine that the *nigger* can be compelled to do what the white man will refuse to do, and that therefore such labour is far better than European labour – more manageable. Yet it will be found in the end that this kind of labour will be very fitful, and a doubtful boon to those who crave it, and the South Sea Islanders will never, for any long period, be obtained as *free* labourers on such terms as will make it worth the while of the capitalist to spend his money upon such a supposed source of wealth.

J. P. Sunderland. Sydney.

The Argus. Monday 5 October 1868 page 4

Some correspondence has been published by the Imperial Parliament, in relation to the introduction of Polynesian labourers into Queensland, which merits attention for a variety of reasons. In the first place, it shows with what alacrity and energy the authorities at the Colonial Office investigate causes of complaint arising in the most distant part of HER MAJESTY'S possessions. In the second place, it proves how eager some of the quasi-religious associations in England are to magnify molehills into mountains, and to impute criminal practices to inculpable people; and, finally, it places before us in a succinct form all that has been done by the Queensland Government for the tutelage and protection of the South Sea Islanders engaged as labourers by the cotton planters of that colony. Most of the correspondence bears date 1867 and 1868; but it is due to Captain TOWNS, who enjoys the distinction of being the pioneer of this industry in Queensland, to say that five years back he submitted to SIR GEORGE BOWEN a detailed statement of the steps taken to

introduce the islanders, together with a copy of the agreement he had entered into with them, and of the instructions he had issued to all persons concerned in bringing them over and in superintending their labour. Subsequently, the principle plantations were visited on several occasions by the Governor of Queensland, who reported to the Duke of Buckingham, in despatch dated the 13th of July, 1867, that he had found the 160 islanders in the employment of Captain Towns, "well fed, well clothed, and perfectly contented. Many of them," Sir George Bowen went on to say, "are to be soon restored to their homes at the cost of Captain Towns, as the period of their engagements is about to expire; and several of these men stated that they would return to Queensland shortly, and would induce their wives and numbers of their countrymen to accompany them." But in January last certain inhabitants of Brisbane held a meeting, and petitioned the Queen to prohibit what, by a bold figure of speech, they called "this traffic in human beings," and about the same time that this document reached the Colonial Office, the Secretary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society addressed a letter to the Duke of Buckingham, averring that South Sea Islanders in considerable numbers had been kidnapped, and forcibly brought into Queensland, and that persons occupying responsible public positions were engaged in the traffic. The Duke requested to be furnished with the authorities upon which such serious allegations were founded; but the society's secretary could refer him to nothing better than certain papers which had been laid before the Legislative Assembly of Queensland. These fail to afford any support to the charges referred to, and Mr. Adderley administered a temperate and dignified rebuke to the mouthpiece of the society for putting forth such groundless accusations.

Among those whom the Duke of Buckingham communicated for the purpose of ascertaining whether there was any, and if so what amount of, truth in these random statements about a revival of the slave trade by British subjects in the South Pacific, was Captain LUCE, of H.M. ship *Esk*, and that officer gave it as his conviction that labour traffic between the South Sea Islands and Queensland would be carried on with justice, and would prove beneficial to the labourers themselves. The Acting-Governor of Queensland has also assured the Colonial Office that there is no legitimate pretext for the fears professed to be entertained by the Brisbane petitioners, and that the South Sea Islanders in that colony are perfectly exempt "from any treatment which by any stretch of the imagination can be termed slavery." In fact, so well satisfied are the first comers with their general condition and prospects, that they have been the means of inducing several hundreds of their fellow-country-men to follow them. Seeing this, and anticipating a steady influx of Polynesians to keep pace with the equally steady expansion of the cotton-planting and sugar-growing industries in Queensland, the Legislature of that colony, in March last, passed an act "to regulate and control the introduction and treatment of Polynesian labourers." It is comprehensive in its provisions and stringent in character: and the emigration commissioners to whom it was referred by the Colonial Office, for their opinion upon it, write: "If properly carried out, it will provide an effectual protection against fraud or force in the collection of the people, against abuses on the voyage, against their ill-treatment during the period of their engagement; and against their unfair retention after their engagements are completed." Upon the general question of introducing these labourers into

Queensland, the emigration commissioners offer the following remarks:- "As far as the immigrant is concerned, it would be useless to deny that it may be attended with some disadvantage; but that, on the whole, a race of so low a type as natives of the New Hebrides must derive great benefit from being brought into contact with a purer morality and a higher civilisation cannot be questioned. The apprehension of the inhabitants of Queensland of the effect on the colony of introducing so uncivilised a population, would be not unreasonable, if large numbers were likely to be introduced; but that is altogether improbable, and the Executive would, under the proposed bill, always have the power of placing a limit on the number."

Subject to these restrictions, and vigilantly protected and regulated by the law, the immigration of South Sea Islanders into Queensland will facilitate the cultivation of tropical produce, which it would be hopeless to attempt to raise by the labour of Europeans; since the latter could not pursue out-of-doors occupations under a torrid sun in the height of summer. As to the Polynesians "supplanting the British labourers" and "reducing to destitution and inactivity the working classes of the colony," in the manner spoken of by the Brisbane petitioners, the arrant nonsense of the assumption is beneath contempt. Every bale of cotton, every cask of sugar, and every hogshead of rum exported from Queensland will provide means of employment for the European population, and at the same time increase that local capital which is the wage-fund of the whole community. The natural capabilities of that country are no doubt very great; but their effectual development will depend quite as much upon the cultivation of articles for which the soil and climate are peculiarly adapted as upon the pursuit of industries to which the white settlers have been habituated in more temperate regions.

The Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertisers, Saturday 12 September 1868, page 5

THE SLAVE TRADE IN QUEENSLAND.—The Brisbane Courier publishes a letter from Mr. William Brookes of Brisbane, which contains some astounding revelations respecting the manner in which the traffic in South Sea Islanders is carried on in order to supply the demands of the labor market in Queensland. The inquiries of Mr. Brooks relate principally to the circumstances connected with the voyage of the brig Syren, which arrived in Moreton Bay on the 2nd January in the present year ; he gives in full the statement of Ishmael Williams, the cook and steward of that vessel, and he verifies that statement, to a great extent by comparison with official records. It appears then, that at the time of the arrival of the Syren she had ninety-one islanders on board ; there being a good deal of sickness among them they were landed, by advice of the health officer, at Stradbroke Island, where twenty-four of them died in about a month. Respecting the way in which the Syren procured her human cargo ,the cook, Williams, says that on arriving at Lefu three men were induced to come on board under the impression that they would receive from £2 to £3 per month in Sydney. At Tanna six men were brought on board, ostensibly to inspect the ship, but when they were got into the hold they were kept there; these men were decoyed by the aid of a chief named Brown, whose services were procured for a musket and a piece of red calico. At Mallicolo twenty-one natives

came on board ; these were persuaded to part with their clubs and implements of war on deck, and were taken down to view the mysteries of the hold, when the vessel set sail, and the canoes were cut adrift. The wives of some of these men are said to have swam after the ship for more than three miles, crying loudly for the restoration of their husbands. At Mutlow Island a good many natives were got on board, but all but two made their escape at night, whereupon the captain punished the watch on deck by stopping their coffee for two days. At Bur-Bur mine men who came to trade were secured in the hold. Many other islands were touched at, and men to the number of one hundred were procured by the same means. At Mare Island the natives could speak English, and were too much civilized to be kidnapped. During the passage to Brisbane the islanders suffered much from sea sickness. The captain tried to induce them to eat by standing over them with a thick stick, threatening to thrash them if they refused. As Mr. Brookes points out, the Polynesian Labourers Act takes no precautions against this style of adding to the population. It licenses vessels to go for South Sea Islanders, and asks no questions about how they are obtained.

The Queenslander, Saturday 24 March 1877, page 4

SOUTH SEA ISLAND LABOUR. IN consequence of the new Government regulations, now in force, it is necessary for employers to make application, in the proper form, for permission to introduce the laborers from the Islands ; and none will be permitted to hire any Islanders unless so applied for before the departure of the vessel bringing them. The undersigned have the LADY DARLING and BOBTAIL NAG running regularly from the S. S. Islands to the ports of Brisbane and Rockhampton, and employers requiring laborers can receive all information, with necessary forms for procuring them, upon applying to MUNRO & CO., Brisbane.

LADY DARLING, FROM SOUTH SEA ISLANDS. THIS Vessel having arrived, EMPLOYERS are requested to make early application, as this is the last ship to arrive in Brisbane under the old regulations. MUNRO & CO., Agents, Mary-street.

THE LADY DARLING for the South Sea Islands, will have immediate outward despatch, and will take return Islanders on board at once For rate of passage money, apply to MUNRO & CO., Mary-street