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New Hebrides Missions.

REV. John Inglis, D.D., for many years a missionary on the Island of Aneityum has written an article in the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* calling attention to the difficulties connected with missionary work in the New Hebrides. He says, "the climate is unhealthy; ague is more or less prevalent on all the islands; the natives are low and degraded; there is no national life; the tribes are small, and the chiefs have little power; every tribe is at war with its neighbour, and they are all cannibals. Some twenty languages are spoken in the group; every one as different from every other as Latin is from Greek, or German is from English. Considerable progress has already been made and, if only let alone, we feel confident that with the blessing of God, we could within a reasonable time, evangelize the entire population, and render life and property secure over the whole group. But we are confronted with two formidable antagonists—the French Government, and the so-called Labour-Traffic. The attitude of the French is menacing. They are threatening to annex the New Hebrides to their penal settlement of New Caledonia. We dread to think of our simple-minded converts being brought into close and constant contact with the criminal classes of France." Dr. Inglis speaks of the Labour Traffic as a fruitful source of evil, threatening not only injury to the missions but, eventually, the extermination of the natives. "At the present time there is a fleet of thirty labour vessels afloat among these islands, each one deporting on an average eighty emigrants. They will make four or five voyages annually, so that in all there is an annual drain of from 10,000 to 12,000 on the male population." The system goes under the smooth name of Free Emigra-

tion, but it is little better than kid-napping. There is no reason why these people should be coaxed away from home simply to sell their labour; much better for them to stay and cultivate their paternal acres and live with their families. There is not an island of the New Hebrides which could not maintain ten times its present population, even with their rude and primitive modes of agriculture. The problem is how to preserve, and if possible increase the population, not to reduce it by emigration. At first the traffic was all meekness; the labourers were engaged for six months only; if they were unwilling to return home at the end of that period, they would be allowed to remain six months longer. By and by the term of service was extended from one year to three years, and subsequently to five, and numbers were kept much longer.

The evil has been going on for twenty years. In 1862 a fleet of slavers from Peru commenced a raid among the eastern islands and carried off some thousands of the natives to work in the Peruvian mines. That was at once put a stop to, but only that a legalized "labour traffic" might take the place of slave dealing. But it was not until the American War raised the value of cotton to such fabulous prices that Fiji, Queensland, and New Caledonia became cotton growing countries, and the demand for labour became enormous. When peace was restored, and the price of cotton fell, the planters began to cultivate sugar instead of cotton, and so the demand for labour continued. It is easy to imagine how discouraging it must be for the missionaries to see the best of their young men taken away from them every year by gangs of mercenary roughts whose only object is to make money utterly regardless of the consequences, socially and morally, to the poor deluded natives.