

tract with any natives of the Northern New Hebrides, and Banks, and Solomon Islands. I doubt if any one of these traders can speak half a dozen words in any of the dialects of those islands; and I am sure that the very idea of a contract cannot be made intelligible to a native of those islands without a very full power of communication readily with him. More than ten natives of Mota Island have been absent now nearly three years. The trader made a contract with them by holding up three fingers. They thought that three suns or moons were signified. Probably he was very willing that they should think so, but he thought of at least three years.

Something has been said about the benefit to the islanders by bringing them into contact with civilization. What kind of civilization they may see on the plantations I do not know, for I have not visited them; neither can I say that I have seen many natives who have been returned to their homes, from whose conduct I may judge of the effects of their "contact with civilization." The reason is simple. Out of 400 or 500 Banks Islanders who have been taken away, I have not heard of, much less seen, one-tenth of that number brought back.

But there is no instance that I can remember of any one of these natives exhibiting on his island any proof of his having received any benefit from his "contact with civilization," much less of his conferring any benefit on his people. The few that have been brought back to the Banks Island bear a bad character among their own people.

But I am not now concerned with the treatment of these islanders on the plantations, nor with the effect of their intercourse with white men or upon themselves or their people.

The African slave-trade was put down as a thing evil in itself, a disgrace to humanity, and a practical repudiation of Christianity. People did not stop to enquire further. It was enough that men were stolen from their homes, and taken away by force.

There is no check at present upon the traders engaged in procuring "labourers" for Queensland and Fiji. Many of these men, whether they are technically and legally slavers or not, are acting in the spirit of slavers. Sir William Manning admitted in the *Daphne* case that "this system of so-called emigration is likely to degenerate, and probably sometimes has degenerated into a practice approaching a slave trade, and perhaps actually amounting to it." It is indeed a mockery to speak of it as a system of emigration.

A most impartial and dispassionate writer in *Blackwood's Magazine*, who had

spent some time in sailing among these islands, and had twice visited Fiji, speaks of the "nefarious nature of many of the transactions of the masters of vessels sent to procure labourers for the Queensland and Fiji plantations, which have undoubtedly, in not a few instances, been nothing less than kidnapping." I leave the statements of some of our scholars to speak for themselves. But I know that throughout the Northern New Hebrides and the Banks Islands deceptions and violence are frequently practised. I know the lawless character and the lawless conduct of persons now engaged in the trade whose names I am not at liberty to divulge. One person writes to me mentioning by name four vessels concerned in carrying on "rough work" with the New Hebrides natives. "You know," he says, "that these men have no scruples of conscience, and, so long as they make money, are perfectly dead to any code of laws, human or divine. I tell you of this, he adds, confidentially, as I have only had the information as a friend, and inform you for your own protection when amongst the islands."

A captain of a whale-ship writes to me: "The natives of these islands would come off in former years, bringing such articles of trade as their islands afford, for which we paid them with hatchets, tobacco, fish-hooks, etc. They trusted us, and we trusted them. At times our decks were crowded. This, when slaving commenced, was all to the slaver's advantage, for the natives were easily enticed below, the hatchets put on, and the vessel was off. Now, no natives come on board the whale-ships, and we, in our turn, dare not land. Again, we used to carry people from one island to the other when they wished it, and they would give us hogs and other articles. This also has been taken advantage of, and the natives carried into slavery instead of home. Should we be wrecked our lives must go for those that have been stolen, and the natives will be condemned for being blood-thirsty, etc., and yet what will the natives have done? Not certainly right, but no more than what civilized people have done in many cases. I hear that they use your name to decoy natives from their islands, and I also heard from good authority that they inquire very particularly of the whereabouts of the Southern Cross."

We experience to some extent the evil effects of this traffic which has been described in the last extract. In many islands where we were already on the most friendly terms with the people, we are now obliged to be cautious. Unless we are so well known as to be thoroughly trusted, we have to begin again to some extent the task of disabusing their mind of the natural suspicion and distrust which these "nefa-