

MURDERERS RELIEVED,

Self-interest, and the money made by this traffic, has caused such sympathy with the collectors that very many in our colony are ready to forgive any evil, even the most dreadful murders, as in the case of the *Hopeful*. A short time ago, the largest petition ever got up in Queensland, with 28,000 signatures, was presented to the Governor in Council there, to get all the kidnappers and murderers of the *Hopeful* pardoned and set free from the punishment they were undergoing. At the last Parliamentary election in Queensland a popular test question put to each candidate was if they would vote for the release of the prisoners of the *Hopeful*. The Governor has granted all a free pardon, and they were set at liberty on February 20, 1890. And so great was the enthusiasm of their sympathisers that they proposed to get up a grand banquet for them on their release; but better judgment prevented this. As the *Melbourne Argus* advised, "Let the pardoned men seek obscurity and be thankful." No doubt they will soon be with congenial company, and employed in the Kanaka labour vessels again on the islands. The readers and petitioners knew they were too valuable helpers to be longer left in prison. Every possible effort is now being made in Queensland to have this traffic continued.

ADDITIONAL TESTIMONIES.

On the highest and most reliable authority let me make known a little more of the atrocities of this traffic.

Near East Cape, New Guinea, natives took from the boat goods that were laid out for them, and bolted to the bush. The white men followed, and thirty eight natives were shot.

At Teste Island twenty-one natives tried to escape by swimming on shore; two were drowned in the attempt, and one, a woman who had been taken from her husband, escaped, but had a wound on her head, as inflicted by one of the quasi-interpreters with a tomahawk, on his own admission. Again, a labour vessel succeeded in obtaining several recruits. Among them were two young men—brothers. Their mother came down to the boat, and begged one of them to remain; but the man in charge told Alex to catch her. Alex jumped on shore, and struck the unfortunate woman with the back of a tomahawk and knocked her down, then picked her up, and threw her into the boat.

At Bently Bay, a boy and woman were captured when the natives were holding a feast; the boats of the vessel also pillaged and burned the village.

At another place rifles were used to make

the natives go on board a labour vessel, but they ran away, and the crew of the vessel fired at them from the boats, and several women were killed. At Normandy Island, the natives came off in large canoes to trade, and when alongside were fired upon. This led the natives in terror to crowd to the one side of the canoe, by which they capsized it, and swam for the shore; but the vessel's boats chased them with the result that nine were taken alive, and three shot dead.

At Harris Island a native was shot dead because the white men were angry with the natives for asking too much trade. The canoe then made off, but the labour vessel chased it, caught it, and took the remaining six natives on board the vessel, and kept them there. One of them died from being wounded. The colony of Queensland and its planters may deny that they are responsible for such crimes, but they license the labour vessels to collect the labour, and no matter how got, they are all eagerly engaged in Queensland for plantation work, and if they were not so employed in our colonies there would be no collecting and no such atrocities on the islands, and as long as this sad traffic is not suppressed by law, I fear God will hold Britain and Queensland responsible for all its crimes, and reckon with them in retributive justice for all the bloodshed and for all the evils of this traffic in men and women.

THE PRESS ON BLACKBIRDING. *

One of our best papers, the *Melbourne Daily Telegraph*, February 21, 1890, in a leader, puts it thus—"Blackbirding in the South Pacific. A blot on the national escutcheon."

"Some of the reddest-handed murderers who ever cut a throat have been released from the Queensland gaols, and that with the Queen's pardon. The news strikes with a dull, sickening blow on the national conscience. The villainous authors of the *Hopeful* atrocities have had their gyves struck off, and have been restored to the companionship of honest men. The horrible facts which set the blood of all Australia tingling occurred in 1884, now nearly six years ago. It is no exaggeration to say that no story of piracy ever published, of the most abandoned and remorseless who ever trod a deck, exceeded in cold-blooded and heartless brutality the crimes of which this *Hopeful* crew were found guilty. We have republished a short synopsis of their hellish doings, for the purpose of letting our readers see what sort of men they are whom the Queensland Governor in Council has released.

The active spirit in the *Hopeful* was a wretch named Neil McNeil, who occupied the dual post of recruiting agent and second