

of them took away a few of our young men. I did not object to this, having had letters from those who had gone, stating that they are well cared for. It is practical education for the natives, and when they come back they will be in a position to till their own ground on better principles, and introduce somewhat civilized manners among themselves.

"Up to the day when the Trident first came among us no one had left without my own and a chief's authority, and though we had heard bad accounts of some of the Fiji traders, no suspicious fastened on this particular vessel. The captain, trader, and the crew, all showed us great civility; the master of the vessel sent me a present of a bag of potatoes and some onions, and I intended to have gone on board to thank him the next day. In the meantime the trader or catcher, as I believe you call him, had paid more liberally for produce than any previous purchaser, so that the people around were very eager to serve him. He, therefore, appointed the morrow at a little after sunrise as the time when he would receive on board, as many yams, cocoanuts and other fruit as they could procure, promising them plenty of tobacco, prints, and other articles. I was told of this, and never suspecting foul play, said, 'go.' These men never did openly propose to employ labour, so I was deceived, thinking that the vessel was a common trader purchasing cocoanuts and other produce in exchange for European goods. Well, on the next morning I believe some fifteen or sixteen canoes, well laden, set off at sunrise to the vessel, then anchored about half a mile off shore, and soon their small cargoes were on the trader's deck. Besides these, four or five of our girls swam out to the craft, and were immediately taken on board and shown down in the cabin to have some biscuits or wine, or whatever it was. Now, my people do not drink, they abhor anything strong, and that is not only because it is wrong to drink intoxicating liquors, but from a natural distaste for anything harsh or fiery; but they like coffee. If the coffee to which they were treated that morning on board the Trident was drugged or not, I will not attempt to say. Enough that twenty-one men—all young and healthy—together with six women, also in the prime of youth, were by some means allured down the hold when the hatches were put on, the anchor weighed, and the Trident sailed away. Two only came back to tell the sorrowful tale when pursuit was out of the question. The worst of it is, we do not know where our people are gone to, and I shall never forgive myself for giving my consent to their going on board—having been thrown off my guard."

"And do you mean to say that you have

not officially reported such a gross outrage?" I somewhat indignantly inquired.

"I have; but what's the use. You are evidently a new comer, otherwise you would see how utterly useless any complaint is. In cases like this, if a cargo has been kidnapped, it is quickly transhipped to some other vessel, and the accused proves that he has no such 'labour' as indicated, while the other, of whom we know nothing, boldly presents his ignorant men before the consul, as natives of our islands voluntarily embarked."

"This is horrible if true," I could not help exclaiming.

"Yes, it is horrible, yet true," was the laconic answer.

"And do you intend to allow this affair to drop?" was my next question.

"I don't know," he answered absently.

"You see, more than two months elapsed before the next vessel anchored here, and that happened to be a Queensland trader. I sent my letters with him, both to the British Consul at Fiji, and to the superintendent of our mission, but it is just as likely as not that they never received my communications. At all events, it will take time before it is cleared up. The men and women are sold long ago for a period, I suppose, of three years, and it is not reasonable to suppose that the purchasers will give them up before their time expires, having paid the bonus for them. By that time we will be able to find them out, and in the interim they will have to suffer for their foolish temerity."

This was a real, practical, Scotch view of affairs, and I had nothing to reply. My hour being up, I bade my communicative host farewell, assuring him that this time no such outrage should be permitted, if I could prevent it.

"Ah," he grimly replied, "nae you mind, sir, he'll nae hae sich a chance again—here at least," and after shaking him heartily by the hand I hastened to the boat, and shortly afterwards trod once more the deck from which, could I believe my narrator, six and twenty free people had been sold into slavery. I went down and "turned in" so as not to show my annoyance.

We did not obtain any labour there that day, but after dusk the coloured individual who had been so inquisitive in the morning, came paddling over alone in his canoe, and then ensued a long conference between him, the captain, and Dick. I did not understand what was on the tapis, but it was evidently business. After an hour or so he returned to the shore, and the captain addressing me said:—

"Mr. ———, we shan't sail before to-morrow night or early dawn the day after,