

THE MAY QUEEN MASSACRE.

Whilst slavery in the nineteenth century aroused the frustration and wrath of social reformers in England, 'blackbirding', in its Pacific context, stirred up far less interest and opposition, suggesting palliative measures rather than the drastic remedy of abolition. Doubtless this was because, with the opening up of Africa, slavery, and the notorious 'middle passage', was more directly in the public eye in England, whereas 'blackbirding' in the distant Pacific, hardly then a part of the world's stage, was bedevilled by a divergence of views amongst the politicians of the metropolitan powers and their colonists abroad as to how the territories and islands should be governed and developed. If, however, the whole horrific truth about 'blackbirding' in the Pacific, as revealed in Professor Maude's recently published book entitled "Slavers in Paradise", had been known a century ago, another Wilberforce would surely have arisen to demand the immediate abolition of that inhuman trade on the other side of the world.

As might be expected, the arguments on one side were almost wholly economic, on the other, humanitarian. The first school argued that 'blackbirding' was amply justified in order to obtain the cheap labour necessary to render profitable the agricultural industries of Queensland and New South Wales, especially the former. The means were held to justify the ends. Thus, in 1883 the north Queensland sugar boom was at its height. Despite the development of irrigation and more sophisticated mechanical processes, the industry as then organized depended for its existence and profits upon a plentiful supply of cheap coloured labour and, the greater and faster its expansion, the greater and faster its need for such labour. Where then more appropriate than to recruit such labour from nearby Melanesia - the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands, lying in an arc to the west and north-west of Queensland; and, at the height of the labour trade in the early eighties, ships were making two or three round trips each season to recruit labourers for Queensland (and Fiji).

The protagonists of this school were also prepared to argue that they were in fact doing little more than bringing the benefits of European civilization to "those who dwelt in darkness".

Such broadly were the arguments in favour of this traffic in human beings.

The arguments of the school opposing such traffic were quite different. Though by the early eighties the visits of recruiting ships and work on the Queensland plantations had become an accepted part of the lives of the natives in the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands, the system carried with it the germs of divisiveness, disintegration and decay in the native societies. A few brief facts will serve to illustrate the serious social damage caused by the 'blackbirding' traffic.

In the traffic's early years, many recruits were simply brutally kidnapped. Recruiting agents dealt consistently in trickery or outright force. Whilst the few ships of the Royal Navy were able to exercise a limited degree of control over recruiters and their activities in voyages between the areas of recruitment and the vessels' destinations, kidnapping and deceit were widely practised by the owners of small cutters and schooners, especially in the New Hebrides, where inter-island traffic was under no supervision. Further many of those recruited were fortunate to survive the voyage to their destination in disease and vermin ridden vessels. Again, many proved to be physically unfit for the heavy work demanded of them on the sugar plantations, and levels of mortality

were high. Even returning to their territory on the conclusion of their term of service, dangers often awaited them. Melanesian island coastlines were meticulously divided between usually mutually hostile communities and if a 'returnee', so called, landed, as not infrequently happened at the whim of the ship's captain, in the wrong area, he almost certainly suffered robbery, if not death.

Certain other features of the traffic, however, deserve especial mention, since they developed in the natives particular ambitions, habits and traits of character which gave rise to tragedies. First, it was European goods, especially rifles and ammunition, which sorely tempted the islanders to engage for service overseas. (In this connexion, it is interesting to note in passing that the covetousness for European goods was also a feature of the so called "Marching Rule" movement in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate at the end of World War II, when the leaders of that movement were able to convince their followers that ships and aircraft would soon arrive crammed with European goods of every description as gifts for them).

Labourers then devoted a large part of their meagre pay to buying rifles and, after three years of service in Queensland, a labourer would be expected to return with those wages invested in rifles and ammunition, axes, tobacco, pipes and European clothes. This massive introduction of firearms could, and did, result in changes in political power on many stretches of coastline - and also resulted in much internecine warfare and social insecurity between and in small tribal sub-groups. This arming of so many natives may well have persuaded them to feel equal to challenging European recruiters, whether for good reason or not. Recruiters were often a danger to those who came after them if they had indulged in deceit, trickery or kidnapping. It was not until 1884, however, before the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific issued a Queen's Regulation prohibiting the sale of arms, ammunition and explosives to natives in the territories under his jurisdiction, though the Queensland authorities took longer to agree to such a measure, which was unfortunate in that that territory was the principal source of the arms traffic.

Finally, whilst some of the attacks made upon Europeans were simply motivated by a desire to secure as much in the way of trade goods as possible, their self-confidence and arrogance in the possession of arms doubtless at times encouraged them to obtain European human flesh for a feast, or the skull of a European for sacrificial or spiritual purposes.

To expect savages thus clothed in a thin veneer of civilization and possessed of some of the Europeans most deadly toys to behave rationally on all occasions was surely optimistic. It is very doubtful whether the authorities and those living and working in Queensland were sufficiently understanding of the effects of the labour traffic, not merely on the labourers themselves, but upon the native society from which the labourers came. In their view, economic considerations justified both the means and the ends. Thus, the first paragraph of a leading article in the Brisbane Courier of Friday, the 1st July, 1881, entitled "The May Queen Massacre", lays the blame for the massacre on the natives, though in mildly measured terms, and demands rigorous punishment, instead of conceding in any degree that the system of 'blackbirding' was as much, if not more, to blame. The paragraph in question reads as follows:-

"The massacre of two boats' crews belonging to the May Queen gives one more instance of the treachery of the South Sea Islanders, and of the careful supervision the recruiting work demands. The boats were engaged in returning a native of the island, and as far as can be seen from the account their crews had given no provocation to the natives. The Aoba Islanders have been so thoroughly successful in this attempt that they will probably be emboldened to repeat it at the expense of any ship that may visit their island in the future. It is to be hoped that they will receive an adequate punishment. The murder of these boats' crews has been a tribal offence, and the tribe should be made to suffer for it..... we hope that the Admiralty authorities will insist on this massacre being rigourously inquired into and punished".

Treachery there certainly was, if by that word is meant the sudden, unexpected and murderous attack on a defenceless recruiting agent and his boats' crews who had seemingly given no provocation. But the insistence in the editorial on the adequate punishment of the perpetrators of the crime unfortunately begs the whole question of this trade in human beings and its effects on native society. And additionally, and most important, it puts its finger on, but does not elaborate, one crucial aspect of the affair, namely, the need for "the careful supervision that the recruiting work demands" - a point which is discussed later in this tale.

Before letting the dramatis personae tell their own stories, it should be mentioned that one William Lockhead, Government Agent on board the May Queen, since all recruiting vessels were required to carry such an agent, followed the usual practice after the massacre of leaving a note at the nearest port, addressed to the Commanding Officer of the first British warship which might call there, giving the bare details of the calamitous encounter with the natives of Aoba Island; his note ran thus:-

HAVANNAH HARBOUR,
"May Queen" Schooner,
29th May, 1881.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that, on the 22nd of this month, we were off the north-east point of Aoba, almost becalmed.

We sent our two boats to land a return islander at his village, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles further south, at a black beach, called Wallwooku, the only beach of that description on the weather side. After landing the boy and getting one recruit, the recruiting agent, Richard McDonald, although particularly warned by the master of the vessel and myself, before starting, on no account to take the two boats on shore, foolishly called the second boat ashore. She no sooner touched the sand than the natives attacked them with tomahawks and knives, slaughtering recruiting agent and eight (8) of the boats' crews, two of which, a Lifu man and a New Caledonian, escaping, and they swam to the vessel, although severely wounded in several places. I am thoroughly of the opinion that they are the same people who killed Renton and Muir and their boat's crew. Our crews were well armed, but did not get a chance to use their weapons. I hope just punishment will be meted out to those wretches this time.

When Renton and Muir and their boat's crew were killed, they were not punished, and now they think they can kill boats' crews with impunity.

I was unwell, suffering from fever and ague, and could not accompany the boats on that occasion.

Having no means of recovering our boats, they are still in the hands of the murderers; and we have gone to Brisbane, as we cannot get any assistance here.

I have &c.,
(Signed) Wm. LOCKHEAD,
Government Agent.

To the Officer in Command,
" H.M. Cruiser.

On leaving Havannah Harbour on the island of Efate, the ill-fated vessel sailed for Brisbane, where it was decided that an inquiry into the massacre should be held. Nine days before the inquiry opened on the 4th July, 1881, before one St. George Ralph Gore, Immigration Agent, William Lockhead submitted his report on the massacre as follows:-

May Queen 26th June, 1881.

To St. George Ralph Gore, Immigration Agent, Brisbane.
Sir,

I have the honour to report the murder of our recruiting agent, Richard M'Donald, and eight of the boats' crews by the natives of Aoba, two only of the crews escaping and swimming to the ship. This happened on the 22nd of May, ship lying off the north-east point of Aoba, nearly becalmed; could not get nearer the return boy's place we wanted to land.

We sent the two boats away at 7.30 a.m. to land him at his home some two and a half or three miles further south along the windward side of the island. As I was too unwell to accompany the boats, suffering at the time from the effects of fever and ague and an injured thumb, the captain and I warned the recruiting agent to be particularly careful and on no account to allow the two boats ashore at the same time, the one boat to act as guard outside of the other. This was not done, unfortunately, hence the catastrophe.

During the day the captain tried to work the vessel southwards to pick up the boats; the wind was too light, however, and the current which runs along the Aoba coast was against us. At 1.30 p.m. a 'cooee' was heard from the water; men were sent to the masthead but could not discover anyone. At 2 p.m. the 'cooee' was again heard, and two men were seen swimming towards us evidently much distressed.

A raft was immediately put together of two hatches and some pieces of quartering, and William Hunter, a plucky foremast hand, and four of our recruits put off to the rescue. They picked up the nearest man, one of our boats' crews named Dick, a New Caledonian severely wounded in five places with tomahawks and knives, and put back to the ship with him. They then put off for the other and got him just in time; he was utterly exhausted. He was the steersman of the second boat, a Lifu man named Billy. He had a fearful tomahawk gash in his back. How they swam the distance, at least two and a half miles, says much for their pluck and swimming abilities; in fact they could not have done it save only for the current being in their favour.

After dressing the wounds, from which they will recover, they gave us the following account of the massacre:-

"They got to the return boy's place at 9 a.m. and were received by a large number of natives - the boys who escaped say 200 men, only a few old women among them, a suspicious circumstance in itself, as I have always found when the natives are friendly there is a number of their women and children among them. The boxes were taken out of the recruiting boat. (I may mention that the return boy had his deceased mate's box with him, sent by the immigration office). The recruiting agent was chatting away with the natives for some time (lots of them could talk English); then he got two recruits, one of whom he sent forward to the bow of the boat and kept the other behind; then wanting some box that Billy had in the second boat, he called him in. Billy said that he reminded the recruiting

"agents of his orders, and that it would be dangerous for both boats to be ashore. However, the recruiting agent insisted, and Billy backed in. As soon as his boat touched the sand, he was hit on the back with a tomahawk; then the recruiting agent was dragged into the water and killed, two of his boat's crew were killed at the same time in the boat, one of them by the recruit he had sent to the bow of the boat. The rest of the crew jumped into the water, with the exception of Dick and Billy, who fought for some time. Billy shot the man who hit him, then fought with the tiller of his boat. Seeing they had no chance of getting one of the boats off the sand, they also took to the water, which was much discoloured with blood they say, and favoured their escape. Most of the natives took after the other boys, some of whom had got out some distance. As soon as they were all despatched, they took after Billy and Dick with the two boats, shooting at them with the Sniders they got in them; when they came round the point, however, and saw the vessel, they turned back so the boys escaped.

The return boy called the place Walwookie; it is generally called Black Beach, on the windward side of the island, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 miles south of the north-east point of the island and about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of where Renton and his crew were killed, I have since been told. There is a point of rocks running out on either side of the beach. I do hope something will be done to punish those treacherous demons this time. It is full time; they have been allowed their own way too long. I am not naturally of a revengeful disposition, but I would like much to assist in punishing those wretches.

The recruiting agent was a quiet, good-natured man who would take no advantage of the natives. He was too trusting, poor fellow. If he had only followed his instructions I would not have this tale to tell.

I have had six years experience as Government agent, and I never yet knew the natives to attack a boat when a second was keeping guard, except with firearms from a distance. The native crews we have to do with in those islands, with the exception of the Loyalty Island natives, are not to be depended upon. When the natives on shore make a rush, as they did in this instance, instead of using their firearms, which are alongside of them, they tumble into the water, thinking it the safer element, although in this case it did not prove so.

Our position during the day was off the north-east point of Aoba, a high hill or point at the southern end of Aurora bearing E by N; Pentecost $SE\ \frac{1}{2}\ E$; the position of the murders was about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of where we were.

I etc.

Wm. LOCKHEAD,

Government Agent."

The enquiry into the circumstances of the massacre of two boats' crews of the Pacific Islands labour schooner May Queen at the island of Aoba in May, 1881, was held at the Immigration Office in Brisbane by the Immigration Agent, St. George Ralph Gore, and lasted from the 4th to the 7th July. The two survivors and others concerned told their stories as follows.

"William Lockhead, being sworn on oath, saith:- I am a Government Agent appointed to accompany labour vessels to the South Seas and have been nearly six years. On 30th March last I took charge of Return Labourers on board the "May Queen", then in the Brisbane River. We sailed same day bound on a recruiting cruise to the South Sea Islands. We arrived off West side of Aoba on the morning of the 17th May last and recruited the coast round to North-East point of the island. At 7.30 a.m. of 22 May the two boats left the ship for the purpose of landing a return islander at his native place called "Black Beach" about 2½ miles south of the North-East point off which the schooner was lying becalmed. I did not accompany the boats because I was unwell. Before the boats left I instructed the recruiting agent Richard MacDonald who was in charge of the boats to be very particular in keeping the second boat outside of the recruiting boat as guard. In pulling to Black Beach the two boats disappeared from sight from the vessel round a point of land. I think it was a little after two o'clock p.m. of the same day when I heard a "Coöee" or cry from the water; a raft was at once rigged with a couple of hatches and some quartering and a white sailor named William Hunter and four of our recruits pushed off to the help of two men whom we had seen from the masthead to be swimming towards the ship. The two men were picked up both very much exhausted. They proved to be a New Caledonian native called "Dick" and a native of Lifu called "Billy Lifu". Both these men were on the ship's articles as boat's crew boys, had sailed with us from Brisbane and had left the schooner in the boats that morning. They were both severely wounded with tomahawk and knife wounds. They had no bullet wounds. The wounds were dressed by the Mate and the Captain, and the men have recovered. The boats were not recovered. The ship then sailed for Havannah Harbour. We found no man-of-war there, so I left a report of the massacre for the first cruiser which might call".

The next witness was the Master of the schooner, who deposed as follows:-

"Michael Dickson, being sworn on oath, states:- I am Master of the Pacific Island Labour Schooner "May Queen" and was so during her late voyage from Brisbane to the South Sea Islands. We left the wharf at Brisbane on 30th March and arrived off west coast of Aoba on 17th May last. We worked the coast to the northward and eastward and on 22nd May we were off the North-East point of Aoba. At 7.30 a.m. of that day I sent the two boats ashore to land a return boy whose name I believe was Ako or Ago. Richard MacDonald the recruiting agent of my vessel had charge of the first or recruiting boat; he had a boat's crew of "Dick Caledonia", Charlie Mallicolo", "Cookie" and "Waterbilly", in all five men.

"Billy Lifu" had charge of the second or covering boat. He had for crew one return and four recruits whose names I do not know. Before he left the ship I gave MacDonald instructions to be careful not to allow the covering boat in on the beach but to keep her outside. He said "Yes" and appeared to understand my order. The boats left the ship and disappeared round a point. I saw them last about 8 or 8.30 o'clock. About 1.30 p.m. of that day the mate reported to me that he heard a "coöee" from the water. I came on deck and sent a man aloft to see if he could discover anything. He could see nothing in the water. At 2 p.m. I heard a "coöee" myself and saw two men in the water. We made a raft and picked them up. They were "Dick Caledonia" and "Billy Lifu". They had been very badly cut with tomahawks.

"I dressed the wounds. I saw our boats come round a point about 12 o'clock. I thought they were coming on board but they turned and went back. I have not recovered the boats. I then went to Havannah Harbour but found no man-of-war there. From there I came straight to Brisbane.

Mr. Lockhead did not accompany the boats on that occasion because he was ill with fever and ague, and his thumb had been badly jammed and was very bad."

The third witness was Billy Lifu, who deposed as follows:-

"Billy Lifu, being sworn on oath, states:- My name in my own place is Thiloog. I am a Roman Catholic and was baptized in Lifu when I was a little boy by a Minister named Pere Faber. I am a sailor on board the "May Queen". I sailed in her last voyage from Brisbane to the South Sea Islands. One Sunday morning at the island of Aoba on the last voyage we went in two boats to land a boy called "Dick Aoba". The first boat was in charge of Dick MacDonald, who was boat-steerer and second mate. He had in the boat with him four boat's crew boys namely "Dick Caledonia", Harry Waterbilly (from Mufiara paru ?), Charlie Mallicollo" and "Cookie" (from Erromanga). I was in charge of the second boat. I had four recruits and one return boy with me. I had two Sniders, two trade muskets and one revolver in my boat. Before we left I heard the Captain say to Dick MacDonald "You go on shore now and you look out". "That's all right" said Dick MacDonald.

We then pulled all the way along the beach where we came to Dick Aoba's place (the boy we were going to land). I went in first and when I got close to the beach I told my boat's crew to back out again and let the first boat come in; they did so. I sung out to Dick MacDonald to come alongside my boat and get the two boxes out of my boat to land them. Mac said "No, you come on shore yourself and land them". He also said "What are you frightened for; I don't think they will do anything here; they see a boy is going to land". There were a lot of people on the beach. The first boat went on shore and I followed him on to the beach. The first box was passed out of my boat on to the beach. Mac called out to me that some of the people on the beach had taken the box away. After the second box was passed out of my boat I called out to the boat's crew to push the boat out from the beach; at the same time I called out this I was sitting in the stern sheets of the boat and was struck right across the back (indicates spot with his hand) with a tomahawk. He cut me right across the small of the back. I fired at the man with a revolver and saw him fall down in the water. I then fired at others who were cutting at some of my boat's crew but every time my revolver was knocked up with a tomahawk and the shot went up in the air. At this time both boats were crowded with shore people standing closely along each side and cutting at the boats' crews. I then drew out the boat tiller and with it warded the blows of tomahawks which were aimed at me.

Then when I saw that some of the boat's crew were killed and some in the water swimming I jumped in after them, and swam away from the beach. I saw "Cookie", two Mallicollo boys, a Tonga-riki boy, another Erromanga boy and "Dick Caledonia" and said to him "We'll swim together". We swam with the tide, the other boys swam against the tide. We sung out to those boys to come with us to follow the tide, but none of them came. I do not know whether they heard us or not. I saw a canoe follow the boys who were swimming and cut them in the water. The shore

"people tried to use the two boats to chase them with but could not manage the oars. Dick and I kept on swimming. We saw the shore people run to the point and try to shoot us as we swam with Sniders which belonged to our boats. After the canoe had cut the boys who were swimming, it and the two boats returned to the beach. By and by we saw the schooner and we kept singing out and they picked us up".

The last witness was Dick Martin alias Dick Mallicolo, who gave evidence as follows:-

"Dick Martin, being sworn on oath, saith:- I am a native of New Caledonia. I am a Roman Catholic and was baptized in New Caledonia when I was a little boy by a minister named Vigureau. I am a sailor on board the "May Queen" and was so during her last voyage from Brisbane to the South Sea Islands. One Sunday off Aoba last voyage about 7 o'clock in the morning a little before we started, the Captain told MacDonald (who was in charge of the first boat) when we got ashore to keep the second boat outside all the time. We went away from the ship to land a boy named "Dick Aoba". When we got near the place (I don't know the name of it) the second boat of which Billy had charge went in first. We were stopping talking to a canoe. Besides MacDonald any myself there were four others including the boy to be landed. When we came up to the second boat Billy called out to MacDonald "You had better take these two boxes ashore Mac". Mac said "Oh, you'd better come ashore, it's calm enough for you to come ashore with the two boxes and land".

The two boats then came on shore. Mac told the boy Aoba to tell his friends to come and take his box out just after they had taken two boxes out of the first boat (that was my boat). Mac told Billy to land the two boxes he had in his boat and a gun. Mac then asked the boy Aoba if any of his countrymen wanted to come and recruit. The boy said "Yes, that some boys wanted to join the boat". One jumped in the boat. Mac gave a musket, knife and tomahawk to some of the recruit's friends. He then sent the boy into the bows of the boat; the boy got a tomahawk from him. Billy had another recruit in his boat. Billy paid for this boy a musket and some tobacco. He asked for a tomahawk for one of his countrymen which was given him. Billy told a boat's crew to take it away from him. He took it and put it alongside of him; just after that I heard Billy tell his boat's crew to shove the boat out; they got up to do so; a man who was standing on the sand at the stern of Billy's boat struck Billy in the back with a tomahawk. I saw him do it. Billy drew his revolver and shot the man. I saw him fall alongside the stern. I was pulling after oar in my boat and just at this time I saw men pulling Mac down in the stern of the boat. He only said one word to me; he said "I'm gone, Dick". I next saw him alongside the boat; he was dead. I told the boat's crew then to shove out the boat but they were all killed but one; he was swimming out, with four in the second boat. When I called out to the boat's crew to shove off, I was struck on the head with a 'nulla-nulla'. I then tried to jump out of the boat but was struck on the back of the neck with a tomahawk. I jumped out between the two boats and when in the water was struck in the right hand with a knife and in the back with a long-handled tomahawk. I dived under the bows of the second boat and swam out. I could see nothing but blood in the water. I soon slipped off my clothes, and after this I found Billy. We swam together with the tide. The other boats' crews' boys swam against the tide. A canoe came out after

"us; there was only one man in her; he was going to cut one man with a tomahawk but the men on shore stopped him. They told him to wait till they came out with the two boats. The canoe then pulled round the swimmers to keep them together till the boats came out. When the two boats came, they killed the boats' crews' boys in the water. The canoe then came after me and Billy and the boats followed, but when they saw the ship they turned back. We swam on towards the ship and by and by were picked up. I saw the recruit in the bows of each boat kill the bow oarsman with a tomahawk. I was standing up at the time. It was just then the fight began".

The Master was then recalled to give further evidence, as follows:-

"Michael Dickson, recalled on oath, states:- With regard to the statement made by "Dick Caledonia" and which has just been read to me that a musket, knife and tomahawk were given by the Recruiting Agent to one of the recruit's friends and that Billy "paid" for another boy a musket and some tobacco, I would explain that the custom of the trade is that "trade" is given in all cases either to induce the intending recruit to make up his mind or to propitiate his friends who, if no trade were given, would at once say that the boy had been stolen.

I have been nearly seven years in the Pacific Islands labour trade and have sailed with five Captains and am therefore aware that what I have stated is and has been the common practice with all vessels in that trade. Muskets, caps, powder and shot form about half the trade taken; thus, if a ship is licensed to recruit ninety boys, about 45 muskets would be taken. I never saw either bullets or lead given as trade. The shot is given the natives to shoot pigeons with. I never knew a ship to go to the islands without a large proportion of muskets and ammunition as "trade". Billy is said to have "paid" for a recruit. This was done doubtless by the direction of the recruiting agent. If it had not been done, the boy's friends would have deemed him stolen and would have fired on the first boat they saw. The natives of these islands have plenty of rifles and ammunition for them which have been brought down by return boys from Queensland and other places".

Finally, the Government Agent was recalled to give further evidence, as follows:-

"William Lockhead, recalled on oath, states:- I have heard the evidence of "Dick Caledonia" read this morning. With regard to that portion of it which states that a musket, knife and tomahawk were given by MacDonalld to the friends of one recruit, and that Billy "paid" a musket and some tobacco for another, I may state that I have been six years a Government Agent. I have an intimate knowledge of the labour trade in all its branches. Muskets, powder, shot and caps form a very large proportion of the trade carried by labour vessels. It has become an established rule at the islands to give a present to the recruit. At one time guns and ammunition were eagerly sought for by the natives; now, however, they seem to prefer tobacco. At the island of Tanna I am aware from personal observation that the natives are reverting to their original weapon, the bow and (poisoned) arrow, the reasons being as they say that the musket kills too quickly. It is preferred that the enemy should suffer the more lingering death by poison. I have never seen either bullets or lead given as "trade". The first trip I made in the service the Captain had a couple of

"hundred-weights on board as "trade". I entered a protest against their use and none were issued.

If any man were recruited at the islands without first making a present either to himself or his friends, the ship would be accused of stealing him, and in all probability the first boat coming to that place no matter from what ship would be fired on. What I have stated as regards giving presents to recruits or friends is true, not alone of Queensland vessels, but of every ship which visits the islands to obtain labourers".

At the conclusion of the enquiry, the Immigration Agent, St. George Ralph Gore, recorded the following:-

"I have read these depositions and am of the opinion that the Government agent is much to blame for allowing the boats to leave the ship without himself being in charge of one of them. If the Government agent is unable from illness to accompany the boats he must not allow them to leave the ship at all. Immigration agents will issue positive instructions on this subject".

Further comment upon this conclusion is made towards the end of this tale.

The scene now shifts to naval headquarters in Sydney. Prior to the receipt by the Commodore of the reports of the May Queen massacre, Commander the Hon. E.S. Dawson of H.M.S. Miranda had already been ordered to visit the New Hebrides and investigate an incident at Montagu Island (lying to the north of Sandwich Island), where a Government Agent had been fired on, and other incidents at the southernmost island of Tanna whence three cases of natives firing on boats had been reported. His orders were then amplified to direct that he should investigate the May Queen massacre; should be able to secure the murderer or murderers, he was to inflict upon him or them adequate and condign punishment, and at the same time to inflict such other punishment on the villages or tribes to which the murderer or murderers belonged as might seem both proper and desirable.

The rest of this tale is told in the report of Commander Dawson to the Commodore, dated the 27th August, 1881. The report comprised no fewer than 99 paragraphs, but those concerned with, or arising out of, the incidents other than the May Queen massacre have been omitted save where they bring out some particular feature of native society, or events or circumstances in those islands a century ago. The report is as follows:-

H.M.S. "Miranda" at Noumea,
27th August, 1881.

Sir,

I beg to acquaint you of my arrival at Havannah Harbour, Sandwich Island (Efate), from Sydney, on August 12th, having proceeded there in order to endeavour to procure information concerning the "May Queen" massacre.

2. I landed shortly after anchoring and communicated with Mr. Salisbury, a British subject, who is at present in charge of a German store.

3. He handed to me a letter from Mr. Lockhead, Government Agent, dated 29th May, 1881, concerning the "May Queen" massacre;....

4. Mr. Salisbury informed me that cases of this sort (i.e. firing) were very common, and frequently not reported, as the natives were very bad shots, and never hit anyone.

5. Mr. Salisbury also confirmed the worst accounts of the brutality of the "May Queen" massacre, which appears to have been absolutely without provocation. The recruiting agent, Mr. Richard Macdonald, killed, is said to have been a quiet inoffensive man

"but, as it appears, of a too confiding disposition.

6. At my request, Mr. Young, a trader in copra and planter in Sandwich Island, came to see me next day.

7. He had lately returned from a four months' residence in the northern or quiet side of Aoba; but he said he rarely went ten yards from his house, and had had his bed-place protected, to avoid his being murdered in the way Mr. Johnson, the American, was.

8. Since the murderer (of Mr. Johnson), Aritugu, was taken away by H.M.S. "Wolverene", the lives of residents have been in far greater danger than before.

9. Mr. Johnson was murdered in revenge, at the request of one of the Longanna chiefs, Segari by name, to whose tribe Aritugu belonged.

10. The murderer, To-moura-moura, son of the chief of the tribe, lives at present about one mile to the eastward of Bice Roads; but Loo, although his tribe is the strongest of the two, would not, if requested, be in any way concerned in effecting his arrest.

11. Loo himself, as a chief, has no power whatever; and his tribe, I am convinced, would be just as bad as the Longanna tribe, were it not that the occasional presence of a man-of-war keeps them in check.

12. I regret to state that outrages in this group of islands seem to be on the increase.

.....
15. When the "Mystery" was wrecked off S-E point of Sandwich Island, the crew would infallibly have been killed and eaten, had not Mr. McKenzie, the missionary, sent twenty-five armed men, and Mr. Young himself proceeded to the rescue with eleven of his labourers, the natives even going so far as to request Mr. Young to retire, as they did not wish to kill him with the others.

.....
19. Having embarked Mr. Young, who had agreed to come with me for the purpose of assisting me to procure information, I left, early on 13th August, for Montagu Island, which lies immediately to the northward of Sandwich Island.

.....
28. I trust it may be possible to hold an inquiry into the truth or otherwise of the woman being stolen (at Montagu Island) as, if true, and the woman was sent back, it would have the best possible effect.

29. It cannot be too strongly impressed on those engaged in the labour traffic, that it is to a disregard to native customs that outrages are frequently due.

30. A woman, in the eyes of the natives, is looked upon as property, and at this island their value is stated to be represented by ten pigs. Whether she wishes to go or not (they frequently run away and swim on board labour-schooners), it is regarded as a case of kidnapping by the natives, if she is taken away without the consent of her proprietors being obtained, which, as a rule, involves the payment of a small quantity of trade in compensation for her loss. The same rule applies to men, as the tribe being weakened by every member that goes away to labour in Queensland or elsewhere, a small amount of compensation is required.

31. I proceeded^{ed} at 8 p.m. for Aoba, and arrived off the west end of the island early on the morning of the 15th August. Mr. Young knowing of a good interpreter at Duan Din, which is situated four miles from the west end of the island, I stopped off that village for the purpose of securing his services.

- "32. The French man-of-war schooner "Gazelle" and the French trader "Havannah" were at anchor off this place.
33. A Frenchman, lately resident here, was, a short time ago, nearly murdered and his house burnt by the natives. He was only saved, himself, at great personal risk, by an Englishman living near; but had the natives carried out their intention, he had previously given them so much provocation, that, in my opinion, he would richly have deserved his fate. He has since left the island.
34. Mr. Devey, the Englishman referred to, has a copra station here, in partnership with a Frenchman, and has lived for five months on the best of terms with the natives, going about unarmed, and considering his position secure.
35. After embarking the interpreter, I proceeded on to Walurigi and anchored there, for the purpose of procuring two more interpreters and guides as well as all information possible.
36. The tribes all along the N.W. side of the island, as far as Walurigi, appear well disposed, and all join in condemning the constant massacres which have been perpetrated on the S.E. side. They are all at war with the Longanna tribes on this account, but there is never very much intercourse between them, on account of the distance and the ranges of hills by which they are separated, and the war only consists in the execution of any members of each other's tribes whom they may be able to lay hands on.
37. Mouli, one of the chiefs (who protected Mr. Chaffin after Mr. Johnson's murder), stated there was no provocation for the "May Queen" massacre, which was ordered by four Longanna chiefs, but that most of the tribes had a share in it.
38. Terembibi, another chief, the most powerful on the island, and of the greatest personal influence (he is stated to have 300 fighting men, the Longanna tribe having only 250), stated he did not know how it originated, but that most of the Longanna tribe had a share in it.
39. Loo's son (whom I saw subsequently - an intelligent youth) stated that the massacre was ordered by three chiefs, and perpetrated for the purpose of having a human feast, no provocation being given. Some of the same tribe were concerned in the Renton massacre.
40. Tukulora, native interpreter, said he was on board the "Aurora" schooner at the time of, and near the scene of the massacre. He heard afterwards that Alamanna, chief of Longanna, "tell his boys kill men belong boat. Boat no steal man; only want leave man home. Wild fellow-man kill "May Queen" boys, make eat" (his own words). (sic). In answer to questions as to whether one clan of tribe was more implicated than another, he replied "All tribe join. Loo at war with Longanna tribe since massacre".
41. After examining many other natives whose evidence was all of the same tenor as above, but very much confused when any attempt was made to arrive at the names of chiefs and persons actively involved, it appeared to me that the massacre was brought about as follows:- A personage of importance, belonging to one of the clans of the Longanna tribe, having died, a human sacrifice was necessary, this race worshipping only the spirits of their deceased ancestors. At the same time the "May Queen" came in to recruit; and, the different chiefs of the villages being down with their followers, in order to receive the usual amount of articles of trade given for each recruit, the massacre was resolved on, and, on the boats being enticed in by the number of labourers volunteering, the crews were attacked and massacred, some in the boats, others when attempting to escape by swimming, the tomahawks and other trade gear in the boats being freely used in the outrage.

- "42. Aritouri appears to be the recognized chief of the Longanna tribe, which is subdivided into several clans, with chiefs of lesser degree, who, however, all have a certain independence of action.
43. Although all the accounts agree that all the clans had a share in the affair, I think there is little doubt that Aritouri's furnished the greater number of participators; but I only arrive at this conclusion from the greater proximity of his village to the scene; indeed, there is no certainty that he was present, though all agree he was one of those who ordered the attack.
44. It appears clear from the foregoing that, firstly, no provocation was given; secondly, that the object of the massacre was a human feast; thirdly, that the tribe as a whole were responsible, and not any particular chief or clan.
45. The chiefs, with one or two exceptions, have but little power, and only dare give an order when it is in accordance with the feelings and customs of the tribe. Were they to give orders in another sense, they would only lose what little power or influence they possess. As an instance of this, Loo, who had promised to provide bearers and guides for the expedition to Longanna, was absolutely unable to get his men to carry the different packages, and it was only under threat of compulsion that sufficient were at last provided.
46. This outrage, involving the murder of nine men with unusual brutality, and following so close on the Renton massacre, when six men were killed, with the expressed intention of the tribe to continue in the same course, clearly demanded such punishment as would effectually put a stop to further cases of the kind.
47. The strength of the south-east trade at this time of year renders a landing on the weather side at all time precarious, and frequently for days impossible. To get at the enemy, it was accordingly necessary to march a distance of nine miles over the hills on a narrow and, in many places, an almost precipitous track. It was also necessary to complete the expedition in one day, as no bearers could be induced to remain in the enemy's country after sunset.
48. To add further to the difficulties of the situation, no water, except of the most filthy description, is procurable on the march.
49. Anchoring in Bice Raods at 4 p.m., August 15th, and Loo, the chief, having agreed to provide bearers and guides, I resolved to land a force next morning, and see if it was practicable to punish the enemy sufficiently by an expedition limited to one day.
50. The force (Commander Hon. E.S. Dawson; Lieutenant J.C. Farie; Sub-Lieutenant M.G. Knight; Messrs. Pasco and Bowman, Midshipmen; Mr. Crabb, Gunner; seamen and marines, 76) was landed at daylight next morning, and the march over the hills commenced at 6 a.m.
51. The object I had in view was to capture the chiefs of the different tribes concerned, as well as others who had taken an active part in the massacre, but, if possible, to avoid any general engagement with the enemy, which would only have resulted in useless bloodshed. I accordingly ordered that on no account was fire to be opened except in case of attack; and the bearers were placed between the main body and the Royal Marines, with orders that under no circumstances were they to join in any engagement.
52. The guides declared they knew the village whose chief was one of the originators, and some of the inhabitants participators in the massacre. After a stiff march of three hours on a very bad track, the bearers refused to proceed, declaring the enemy were in

"great numbers on the right flank preparing to attack us, several natives being seen and heard at that time. After considerable difficulty they were induced to proceed, and in half an hour more the village was reached and surprised, but only seven men, including the chief, taken.

53. The village was not a very large one, but sufficiently so to prevent its being surrounded. The blue jackets, under Lieutenant Farie and Sub-Lieutenant Knight, occupied the village in a most dashing manner, the prisoners captured being taken when coming out of their huts. The Marines promptly occupied an open space in the centre as a reserve.

54. I regret to say that the bearers behaved very badly, throwing down their bundles and rushing in after our men, pillaging everywhere. One of the bearers, in self-defence, also killed a native who had attempted to club him. On investigation, I found that I could attach no blame to this man for the course he had pursued.

55. On two of the prisoners being brought in, I observed that they were objects of marked attention, and soon learned that one of them was the chief, and the other a participator in the massacre.

56. On a close investigation, disturbed frequently by alarms of attacks, the natives apparently being in the neighbourhood in great numbers, it turned out that the chief had directed his followers to attack the boats' crews, having himself been down on the beach at the time. The other one, who was quite a boy, about 16 or 17 years of age, was stated, not only by some of the native bearers, but also by some of the prisoners, to have taken an active share in the outrage, tomahawking the men in the water.

57. The chief, Louisfanna by name, on being questioned, admitted being present at the massacre, and telling his followers to attack the boats. He further stated, the reason for the massacre (vide paragraph 39) was, his brother (by another interpreter, "relation") had died, and a human sacrifice and feast were necessary.

58. In investigating the case, I employed two interpreters separately; and although the translation differed, the substance was the same. The prisoners were also examined, and one, an old man, testified the chief was on the beach, and that the boy referred to joined in the massacre; but this latter could not be blamed, being under the immediate eye of his chief. The other prisoners, except one, admitted sharing in the feast, but were not proved to have been present at the outrage. The chief was subsequently shot by the natives, as an example, in the presence of the other prisoners, who were all released, having first been utilized as guides in proceeding to another village which they stated was deeply implicated.

59. After destroying the first village and giving the force time for refreshment, we proceeded towards a village about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the seashore, one of the prisoners acting as a guide. The natives were seen in numbers evacuating this village as we approached, and it was occupied without resistance. A boat-hook with two chests and some European clothing were found here, and the village was destroyed.

60. I should have mentioned that several of our bearers again behaved badly, refusing to come on from the first village, which was about three miles from the shore, being afraid of not getting into their own country before sunset. They proceeded home, and their loss was much felt on the homeward march, which was commenced at 3.30 p.m.

"61. The men were much exhausted with the day's exertions, several falling out shortly after starting. Two men had to be carried on stretchers nearly the whole way back, which combined with the fact of darkness setting in about 6 p.m., and the guides losing the track on one occasion rendered the return march very slow and tedious.

62. The ship was eventually reached at 4 p.m. (sic), a distance of certainly twenty miles, and probably upwards, having been compassed during the day.

63. I regretted extremely being unable to push on to "Aritouri's" village, which must have been quite close; but in the exhausted condition of the force it was quite impossible, and the head chief with his tribe, which of all others I am persuaded should have been most severely punished, have so far escaped; but I have little doubt that the tribe as a whole will desist from any further outrage on boats for some time to come.

64. I beg most strongly to point out how much my difficulties in this case have been enhanced by the fact of there being no European available who knew anything about the place or the language. Even the native missionaries could furnish no information, being unable to go there for fear of being eaten. The only thing I had to go on was native evidence, which had at all times to be passed on to me through the medium of a native interpreter; even the natives themselves seem to have but little knowledge of the Longanna country, the guides none of them knowing the road which led to Aritouri's village, which I endeavoured to get the prisoners to guide me to, but they only took me to the one where they said many resided who had been implicated in the massacre.

.....
66. In concluding this portion of my despatch I feel it my duty to bring to your notice the admirable way in which Lieutenant Farie, Sub-Lieutenant Knight, and all the other officers and men landed, and performed their duties. The march was a long and tedious one, and, had it not been for the pluck and determination shown by all ranks, the return to the ship must have been considerably delayed. Any advance into a country of this nature would be quite impossible if only a very slight resistance were made by the natives, and there is no doubt that the force would have been attacked on several occasions if it had been numerically less strong.

67. On the afternoon of the 17th August I proceeded to Walurigi and made presents to two chiefs who have always been friendly to Europeans.

68. On the 18th August I weighed and proceeded to the south-east end of the island, with a view to trying to recover the "May Queen's" boats. The schooner "Sea Breeze" was lying off, returning labour, and embarking recruits.

69. I learned that the "May Queen's" boats had been broken up, and the "Sea Breeze" further informed me that Aritouri had sent off a bundle of palm leaves (called the Tabu palm), among the natives a sign of peace.

70. This action on his part fully confirms the view I had taken, that he is regarded as the head of the whole tribe; but as he, himself, and his whole clan (the chief offenders) are still unpunished, and not knowing what further action you might deem necessary, I sent no reply to his request.

"71. To capture Aritouri himself will be a matter of great difficulty, and if the other tribes were persuaded to combine to effect it, the only result would be a wholesale massacre of the tribe. It is possible he might be taken by sending a small force in a labour-schooner.

72 To proclaim a blockade of this part of the island also would be most undesirable, on account of the number of return labourers continually being brought back; these, if landed on any other part of the island, would assuredly be killed.

73. I had thought at one time of undertaking another expedition from the S.E. side, waiting for a smooth day for landing and encamping on the beach if unable to re-embark; but in view of the fact of Aritouri's suing for peace, and the probability of no more outrages taking place, I determined to await your instructions before proceeding further in the matter.

.....
92. There appears to be a constant state of inter-tribal warfare in these islands, very small value being set on human life. The chiefs are very numerous, each one, however, has but a small number of followers, and their influence over these is but small.

.....
95. I trust that my proceedings will meet with your approval. I regret having been unable to deal with the Aoba outrage as satisfactorily as I should have wished; but I venture to submit that rarely has a case been involved in so much obscurity, the isolation of the tribe, its geographical position, and the fact of there being no European with any knowledge of the language or country, all combining to render my position one of unusual difficulty".

The most remarkable feature of this tale is the landing of expeditionary forces on three occasions, those at Montagu Island and Tanna (which successfully achieved their objectives), and another but much larger one - not far short of one hundred personnel - in pursuit of those who had committed the May Queen massacre. The landing of such forces was by no means the usual procedure since, upon the approach of a man-of-war, it was customary for the native population to desert their settlements and melt into the bush; and, as Commander Dawson notes "Any advance into a country of this nature would be quite impossible if only a very slight resistance were made by the natives" particularly from their jungle cover. Maybe, however, he thought the risk to be outweighed in some degree by Mr. Salisbury's remark that "the natives were very bad shots and never hit anyone".

An especial risk was that of ambush of such a landing party, particularly as the terrain and jungle cover through which it advanced and retired was admirably suited for such an operation by the natives. In paragraphs 47 and 52 of his report Commander Dawson emphasizes the appalling topography through which the landing party had to advance - a fact confirmed by Commodore Wilson who, in his despatch to the Admiralty No. 248 of the 21st September, 1881, when forwarding Commander Dawson's report, wrote:-

"Commander Dawson's report will enable my Lords to form some slight idea of the difficulties experienced in getting at the natives implicated in the "May Queen" outrage; but, having

"personally visited the Island of Aoba, I can assure them that in reality they far exceed what they appear to have been. The bush is dense; the mountains, ranging from 2,500 to 3,000 feet in height, are very steep; and the natives numerous and treacherous and experts in the use of the poisoned arrow".

If further confirmation as to the jungle-covered terrain were needed, I can say that I have myself visited and flown over the northern New Hebrides, including Espiritu Santo, Aoba and Pentecost, during the war in a Catalina aircraft of the Royal Australian Air Force, and can confirm the topography described by Commodore Wilson and Commander Dawson.

The very length of the march - "a distance of certainly twenty miles, and probably upwards" - during the day (though the time of 4 p.m. in paragraph 62 of the report is an obvious error), coupled with "the very slow and tedious" return march to the ship, and the exhaustion of members of the landing party before reaching the ship made them even more potentially vulnerable. Further, in addition to the small arms and ammunition which were required to be carried, the exhaustion was also almost certainly caused by the uniforms, helmets and other accoutrements of the party, which were totally unsuited to a march of some twenty miles over mountainous and jungly terrain in the heat of the day in a hot and humid tropical climate.

But commanding officers of Her Majesty's men-of-war were often in a dilemma in investigating such incidents. They might decide to put a landing party ashore to seek to capture the wrongdoers, or to make a show of force with the man-of-war and effect such damage and loss on the wrongdoers as might be possible. The party led by Commander Dawson himself was fortunate in capturing a chief, who might well have been expected to take to the bush, as so many of his followers did, before the landing party's arrival. Apart from that, however, all the party achieved was the destruction of the two villages visited. But even that was much less serious than it sounds, since native dwellings could be rebuilt very speedily.

The other course of action followed by men-of-war was to close the shore as nearly as practicable to the village(s) of the wrongdoers and then, on the assumption that such village(s) had been evacuated by the natives, to bombard the village(s). But such action was by no means always profitable; thus, it is recorded that some years later:-

"H.M.S. Opal fired 19 shells in the direction where the village was supposed to be, damaging one coconut tree. The villagers watched and cheered the performance from further up the beach".

Finally, it should be especially noted from paragraph 58 of Commander Dawson's report that "the (captured) chief was subsequently shot by the natives, as an example, in the presence of the other prisoners, who were all released", it being the declared policy that naval personnel should have no hand in such executions, but that it should be left to the natives themselves, albeit under naval supervision.

In conclusion, a comment upon the decision by the Immigration Agent, St. George Ralph Gore that, if the Government Agent on board a ship was unable to accompany the recruiting boats ashore, the boats should not be allowed to leave the ship. First, blind

obedience to such a directive would almost certainly have caused serious problems - and probably disobedience - at times, since Government Agents were sometimes liable to suffer injuries, as Mr. Lockhead did, or suffer from ague and fever (probably malaria, rife in the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands) as Mr. Lockhead also did. It is almost unthinkable that voyages of recruit ships should be suspended or abandoned with much loss of profit if a Government Agent could not on occasion go ashore himself in the recruiting boats. In any case, such a decision as that of the Immigration Agent avoided the basic problem, which was firstly the failure of the recruiting agent to make proper use of his second guard boat despite directions, warnings and examples of previous fatalities, and, in the wider sphere, to insist that 'returnees' were not permitted to take back arms and ammunition with them on the expiry of their contracts, and that guns should not be freely handed over when men were recruited. This massive build up of arms inevitably spelt disasters sooner or later.

A few years ago there was a popular folk song entitled "Where have all the flowers gone?", of which one line of the song's refrain was "When will they ever learn?". One is tempted, in reading accounts of 'blackbirding' in Melanesia in the last quarter of the 19th century, to find oneself constantly humming that line of the refrain, and to marvel that recruiters and their boats' crews so often failed to take the most elementary precautions when there was abundant proof that failure to do so had so often resulted in tragedy.