

Some German Subjects in South Sea Islands



NATIVE OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS.
(Copyright, 1901, by Frank G. Carpenter.)

THURSDAY ISLAND, Torres Strait, July 17.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—Germany is rapidly spotting this part of the Pacific with its possessions. It is giving new names to its different properties, so that one will soon need a Teutonic dictionary to know where he is. Just north of Torres strait, on the other side of British New Guinea, is Kaiser Wilhelm's Land. This is the German section of New Guinea, the largest island in the world. The great collection of islands to the eastward, which was once known as the New Britain archipelago, is now the Bismarck archipelago, and, instead of New Britain and New Ireland, we have Neu Pommern and Neu Mecklenburg. The Germans now own the Admiralty islands. They have renamed the Duke of York islands Neu Launenburg. They have long owned the Marshall islands and in 1899 they bought the Carolines, the Pelews and the Ladrões of Spain for something like \$1,000,000. They would have in-

ments now come from the emperor himself. The material developments are all still in the hands of the New Guinea company, which controls the trade not only of the mainland, but of the islands, and which has steam and sailing vessels moving from port to port.

Kaiser Wilhelm's Land proper is about one-third as large as the whole German empire and its German population is just fifty-three souls. It has in addition to these about 110,000 natives and five other Europeans, so you can see that the land is by no means overcrowded. The seats of government at present are the town of Stephentown on Astrolabe bay and Herbertshöhe on the island of Neu Pommern.

Resources of the Colony.

Not far back of Astrolabe bay are the Bismarck mountains, which are now being prospected for gold and that so successfully that mines have recently been opened, although I am unable to say anything as to the output. Coconut groves to the extent of 35,000 trees have been set out and there are also plantations of coffee, cotton, tobacco and rubber.

One of the best parts of Kaiser Wilhelm's Land is at the southeast, off Huon gulf. Here there is a good harbor and the country is said to be well populated. The land is wooded along the coast, but further back it consists of rolling plains, which are dotted with trees and are as green as an English park. The New Guinea company has a station here and the natives raise horses and cattle.

Some of the land is irrigated by the natives, who use tubes of bamboo to carry the water from one level to another and to distribute it over their little fields. They are natural farmers and grow yams, sweet potatoes and bananas and of late Indian corn. A great deal of the work is done by the women, although both women and men work on the plantations of the New Guinea company.

The best products so far have been cotton and tobacco. There are several cotton plantations about Astrolabe bay, one of which, near Konstantinshafen, recently produced 13,000 pounds of cotton from twenty-five acres, or an average of 520 pounds per acre. The wages paid on the plantations range from \$1 to \$2.50 per month. The best workmen come from the islands

scars, as the Japanese burn themselves with the moxa.

I have photographs of native houses recently taken in Kaiser Wilhelm's Land. Many families live together and many of the houses are of enormous size. They are frequently built upon piles, a platform of poles being first constructed, a skeleton framework built upon this and mats of woven leaf or grass fastened to it. The mats are so arranged that they can be raised or lowered so as to keep out the mosquitoes and flies, which are exceedingly

noxious country, having two volcanoes, which are constantly active, and one mountain of an altitude of more than two miles above the sea. The natives here are of the same race as those of New Guinea, and they are quite as savage. In most cases the men go naked, and in some of the islands the women do not wear clothing until they are married, and after marriage they have but little. Still both sexes are fond of ornament. Men and women pierce their ears, the holes in the lobes being gradually stretched until they are as big

hunting is the profession and pleasure of a part of the young men. Polygamy is practiced and some of the chiefs have as many as ten wives. They are to a certain extent farmers and raise bananas, yams and taro. They are good fishermen and gather shells and pearls for sale.

Beche de Mer Fisheries.

Along the coast of these islands and especially about New Guinea and in Torres strait one of the chief businesses is gathering and shipping beche de mer, the gigantic sea worms or slugs, which are so much prized by the Chinese, ranking with birds' nest soup and sharks' fins as one of the delicacies of every celestial feast. A large part of the shipments of beche de mer are from Thursday island. There are companies here which are engaged in the business, employing hundreds of men. They use boats of five or six tons each and travel from place to place gathering the sea slugs and preparing them for the market. They are caught by diving, the best divers coming from the various islands, some from the Louisiade group, some from the Solomons and some from New Guinea. Some are men and some are women, the latter being paid as little as \$1.25 a month. The men divers often receive as high as \$5 a month, but on the average about \$2.50. The wages are often paid in tobacco and clothing instead of money.

Cucumbers of the Sea.

The beche de mer are called the cucumbers of the sea because they look so much like cucumbers as they lie in the water. They range in length from one foot to four feet and from the thickness of your wrist to that of your calf. They are found upon the coral reefs and are picked off at low tide or obtained by diving down to a depth of from twelve to eighteen feet. The fishermen collect them in sacks and carry them to curing stations, where they are boiled, cleaned and laid in the sun to dry. After that they are carried to the smokehouse and smoked for twenty-four hours. They have now shrunk to the length of six inches and look like well-cooked Frankfurter sausages. They are next bagged up

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SOME SOUTH SEA "GERMANS"

bad. In other parts there are houses built in the trees, in which the people retreat in times of danger.

War and Cannibalism.

The different tribes are frequently at war with one another and the missionaries tell me that they have a system of vendetta which goes on between tribes and villages, often lasting for years. Cannibalism exists in some localities, though not to a great extent. The British have observed it among the people along the Gulf of Papua and it is also found in northern New Guinea. The ordinary food of the natives is about the same as that of the Samoan islands, their chief diet being yams, taro and bananas. In German New Guinea, strangely enough, the natives are natural beer drinkers. They make a liquor by chewing the root of the kava plant and fermenting the spittle-soaked mixture. After awhile it becomes intoxicating and is then used in ceremonial feasts. Both sexes chew the betel nut, but, as a rule, they do not drink intoxicating liquors. In British New Guinea it is against the law to sell intoxicating liquors to the natives and anyone who does so is subject to a fine of \$150 or more.

In the Bismarck Archipelago.

The islands of the Bismarck archipelago have some stranger tribes than those of New Guinea itself. On one island, according to my best authorities, the girls are kept in cages from the age of 6 or 8 years until they are married. The cages, made of wickerwork, are set up inside larger houses made for the purpose. The girls are only taken outside once a day to be washed, but otherwise they are not permitted to get outside the wicker. Their food is handed through the bars and they move about at times like caged lions. These cages are under the charge of the old women of the tribe, who see that the girls do not flirt with the passersby or the peepers-in. The young men have the right to look at the cages now and then and, probably, after making proper presents to the watch guards and the parents of the girl, they can woo the maiden through the meshes of bamboo.

I am told the girls do not suffer in health from their imprisonment and that notwithstanding their seclusion they make very good wives and later on are by no means averse to having their daughters caged up as they were. The girls mature very rapidly in this hot climate. The marriageable age is 11 or 12 and at 15 a girl is an old maid.

In Neu Mecklenburg.

The island of Neu Pommern is 250 miles long and Neu Mecklenburg perhaps 100 miles shorter, with a width on the average of about fifteen miles. Both islands are more or less rolling, Neu Mecklenburg having the Schleintz mountains, which reach a height of 7,000 feet.

In Neu Mecklenburg the people of each village are divided into two classes and marriage between the classes is strictly prohibited. If a woman marries outside of her class the punishment is death, and, if a man, he suffers a heavy fine. The women and men go naked. Cannibalism is common, and both human beings and pork are cooked for food, all other kinds of eatables, so it is said, being eaten in a raw state. The people live in small huts, which are of a beehive shape and surrounded by bamboo fences. The young unmarried men have club houses where they live together, and the girls, as I have said, are confined to the cages.

A little to the east of the Bismarck archipelago are the Solomon islands, which until 1899 belonged almost entirely to Germany. The uppermost part of the chain, including some of the larger islands, are still German, and they are now under the officials of Kaiser Wilhelm's Land. The principal island in this group is Bougainville, which is bigger than Porto Rico. It is a moun-



BECHE DE MER DIVERS FROM THE SOLOMON ISLANDS.

cluded Guam in the bargain had we not taken possession of it in our settlement of the Spanish-American war, and they are still looking about for everything loose. All the islands I have mentioned are now governed in connection with Kaiser Wilhelm's Land and altogether they form what may be called Germany's colonial island empire of the Pacific.

Kaiser Wilhelm's Land.

Let me give some new information about Kaiser Wilhelm's Land. The country is almost unknown and a vast part of it is yet unexplored. The Germans have their scientific parties and surveying expeditions scattered here and there over it, but the interior will long remain untrod by white men. The country is better known as German New Guinea. It forms the north-eastern quarter of that island, having been under the rule of the Germans for the past seventeen years. Up until 1899 its government was in the hands of the German New Guinea company, but the administration was taken over by the imperial government two years ago and all appoint-

of the Bismarck archipelago, and the New Guinea company is using some imported labor from there. There are plantations also in the archipelago itself, the largest being in Neu Pommern, where one man has 500 acres in coffee and cotton, and where the Hamburg Plantation company is said to be growing coffee successfully.

Queer Subjects of the Kaiser.

The German emperor has some rare birds in his colonial aviary of the Pacific. The natives of Kaiser Wilhelm's Land are, if anything, wilder and more savage than those of British New Guinea. There are thousands of them who go naked save for a breechcloth of bark for the men and a short petticoat of woven grass for the women. Along the extreme northern coast there are some tribes which go entirely naked, with the exception of a shell necklace and a few bird-of-paradise feathers which they stick in their hair. Some tribes paint themselves in stripes of white, red, yellow and black, and some gear themselves with flints and also by burning

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