

99/302 h J

Question of removal of Pitcairn Islanders to Norfolk Island

*Alleging that
two of the families
are entitled
to about 50
acres at
Norfolk Island*

The Lieutenant Governor has forwarded the accompanying letter from the Secretary of State for the Colonies enclosing a communication from Mr O.M. Quintal of Norfolk Island, raising the question of removal of some of the inhabitants of Pitcairn Island to Norfolk Island, and expressing his willingness to act in the matter if required free of cost.

In the cutting I have taken from the Daily Telegraph of the 24th March relating to the Pitcairn Islanders, the following passage occurs :-

"In acknowledging these despatches Mr Chamberlain observes that to deport the inhabitants to Norfolk Island would be impossible. Apart from the fact that the Pitcairn Islanders have expressed no wish for their removal, the present state of Norfolk Island would not says the Colonial Secretary, warrant such a measure. In these circumstances, he desired Sir G.X.O'Brien to endeavour to ascertain the possibilities of opening up communication with Tahiti."

It does not therefore seem that there is any action for this Department to take in the matter.

*with regard however to the alleged
claim to land at Norfolk Island*

6th April 1899

*Mr. Junkenal may be asked
to submit any documentary evidence he may
be able to produce in connection with
the claim*



New South Wales.

No.14.

The Honourable

The Secretary for Lands.

(Sgd) Fredk: M. Darley.

Lieut:-Govr.

29:3:'99.

Downing Street,

20th February 1899.

My Lord,

I have the honour to transmit to you, for such action as your Ministers may think proper, a copy of a letter from Mr O.M.Quintal of Norfolk Island raising the question of removing some of the inhabitants of Pitcairn Island to Norfolk Island and offering his services in the matter.

2. I shall be glad if you will cause Mr Quintal to be informed that I have received his letter and that I am obliged to him for it.

I have &c.,

(Sgd) J. Chamberlain.

The Officer Administering

The Government of

New South Wales.

20th Decr: '98.

*Letter to
W. O. M. Quintal
29. 3. '99*

Questions asked in the British Parliament re Pitcairn Island.

Parliamentary Debates (British Parliament).

First Volume of Session 17th. Feb. 1899.

211-10-15-99
Feb 10 1899

Mr. Pirie (Aberdeen N.): I beg to ask the Secretary of State for the Colonies, with regard to the recently issued correspondence relating to the Pitcairn Islanders, in regard to whom we have assumed a sort of moral responsibility, whether the Government propose taking steps to carry out regular communication between them and the Paumotu Group of Islands as recommended in the Report by the Commanding Officer of H.M.S. "Royalist", or to take other steps to improve the conditions of life of the inhabitants of those Islands which if allowed to continue as at present will cause these Islanders to gradually drift into imbecility?

The Secretary of State for the Colonies (Mr J. Chamberlain, Birmingham W.) :- The Honorable Member will see from the correspondence that the High Commissioner of the Western Pacific has been instructed to endeavour to ascertain the possibilities of opening up communication between Pitcairn Island and Tahiti.

THE GATTON TRAGEDY.

INQUIRY RESUMED.

MRS. M'NEILL'S EVIDENCE.

BRISBANE, Thursday.—The inquiry into the Gatton tragedy was resumed at Toowoomba to-day.

Inspector Urquhart stated that there was only one witness to be called, Mrs. M'Neill. He stated that she had undergone a medical examination that morning, and the medical officer had stated that she was able to attend, though her health was still critical, and probably a public examination would be injurious to her. He, therefore, asked that the public be excluded from the court. Mrs. M'Neill was then carried into court.

Mr. M'Neill asked to be allowed to remain with his wife, but the request was refused.

Mrs. M'Neill deposed that she usually lived with her husband at Westbrook. He occasionally visited his parents at Tent-hill. She remembered Boxing Day. She attended the Mount Sylvia races with her husband that day. They left for home about 5 o'clock, and passed Barlow's Hotel on Tent-hill on the way home. They reached home shortly after 6. The members of Murphys' family were at tea. She heard nothing of the dance in Gatton. While at the races she heard a man named Jimmy Ryan, who resided at Blackfellows' Creek, ask Ellen to go to a dance at Mount Sylvia that night. Ellen said that she was going to a dance in Gatton. He pressed her to go to the Mount Sylvia dance. She declined. Ryan said to Ellen, "If you come I will bring Mike," but Ellen only laughed, and witness thought that the allusion to Mike was a joke. After tea on Boxing Night Norah and Ellen prepared to attend the dance. Before she saw Michael getting ready she thought that her brother Pat would drive them to Gatton. Her husband never had any intention of going to the dance as far as she knew. Michael, Ellen, and Norah left for the dance about 8 o'clock. Her brother Pat left soon afterwards. After they had gone she only remained up half an hour, when her mother assisted her to bed. Her husband was with her that night. Her two-year-old daughter also slept with her. She could not remember how long she had been in bed before her husband brought the child to her. When her husband came into the room he was dressed, but had no boots on. She did not know the time she went to bed, nor did she know if her husband closed the doors. Her mother was reading in the sitting-room. She (witness) heard her turning over the leaves of the book. She could have seen the light in the sitting-room if she had looked. She did not remember if she could distinguish the objects in her room or not. She had not been told to say she did not remember or did not know by anybody. Witness further said her husband did not speak when he brought the child in, but got into bed.

Inspector Urquhart: "With his clothes on?"

Witness: "Yes."

Witness did not know how long that was after Pat left. She did not know if the bedroom door was open that night. She did not think her husband spoke to her after he got into bed or she to him. Witness went to sleep, but did not know how long after he got into bed. Perhaps it was half-an-hour. She did not know if her husband and children woke up during that time. She did not notice the door of the room open, and she did not hear anyone ask her husband to have a drink. Her husband generally put his boots in the bedroom. She did not see him take them off that night. She slept all night. Nothing disturbed her. Her husband did not get out of bed that night on her behalf. She woke next morning soon after daylight. Her husband was not up. She did not remember if he had his clothes on the same as when he went to bed. Her husband sometimes slept in his clothes for fear the child should be troublesome. Witness did not hear anyone enter or leave the room that night. She did not know if her husband put his boots on before he went out the morning after Boxing Day. M'Neill said, "The girls have not returned yet." He soon after went in search of them, and returned a little after 10 o'clock. She asked if they were coming. M'Neill, speaking in an ordinary way, said, "No; they are dead in a paddock near the cemetery on the Tent-hill road." Witness thought she asked M'Neill how it happened. M'Neill first told her they had been murdered. Neither witness nor her mother asked M'Neill who had done it. She had no suspicion of any person, nor had she ever had suspicions. She had never said she knew whose doing it was. She had been married three years, and lived in Toowoomba before she was married. She knew Thos. Ryan, and once kept company with him. He quarrelled with her mother because she objected to his attentions. Her mother had once beaten her for going with Tom Ryan. Her sister sometimes brought her letters from Tom Ryan. Ryan was not annoyed when witness married M'Neill. She told Ryan that her mother objected to the match. Norah and Ellen were also against it. They objected to Ryan because he was fond of drink. She had never told anyone her husband was away on the night of the murder, nor had anyone asked her. Witness further stated she and Ryan had been sweet-hearting nine or ten years before she married. She had never heard that Ryan threatened to be revenged on her mother. M'Neill and the Murphy family were on good terms. Neither M'Neill nor any of the Murphy family ever told her they suspected anyone. She did not know if M'Neill or Michael ever had a revolver. She did not know if M'Neill was left-handed. Witness further stated that M'Neill was in the habit of shooting his boots.

THE PITCAIRN ISLANDERS.

A LESSON IN DEGENERATION

(FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

LONDON, February 17.—The most interesting Parliamentary paper to achieve publicity lately is that composed of correspondence relating to the condition of the Pitcairn Islanders, which was issued a day or two ago. The picture of the daily life of the descendants of the Bounty mutineers afforded by a perusal of the paper is not an inviting one, suggesting as it does that the Islanders are rapidly degenerating. Captain Dyke, of the *Cencus*, who visited the island in November, 1897, reported to Rear-Admiral Palliser that the population was then 149, that the people seemed happy and contented with their lot, though that lot seems to consist of merely living from day to day. The islanders had no meat, no tea, no coffee, nor, in fact, any of those adjuncts to the table usual in civilised communities. For literature they cared nothing, refusing even the books and papers Captain Dyke offered them. So far as he could see, they "did nothing all day," and the morals of the community were extremely lax. In concluding his report, he states:—"I have no hesitation in saying that soon the question will have to be faced: Are they to continue as they are, *viz.*, marrying among themselves and increasing? The slender resources they have will not stand a much greater population, and among the young men a desire is evinced to leave the island."

In forwarding this report, Rear-Admiral Palliser suggested the appointment of a Governor, and attributed the lack of moral fibre to the absence of discipline and incentive to work.

These communications were forwarded by Mr. Chamberlain to Sir G. O'Brien, High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, who, replying in October last year, enclosed a report on the Pitcairn people by Mr. Hunter, who had recently visited the island in the capacity of Judicial Commissioner. After a brief review of the history of the community, he remarked that the men appeared strong and of good physique, though inclined to stoop; the women robust and active, but greatly disfigured by the loss of their front teeth. This was noticeable among some of the younger ones, who otherwise might have been termed comely. Staff-Surgeon Beatty, of the *Royalist*, attributed the loss of the teeth to "degeneration" or "physical devolution." The children were bright, merry little things, "the only redeeming feature in the place," whereas the adults, with the exception of one or two of the older ones, had a tired, weary, hungry look. They began and ended their day with prayer; they neither drank nor smoked, and appeared to be almost vegetarians. If questioned, the questions had to be put in plain, simple language, or they did not understand. The manner in which the men handled their lifeboat in a heavy sea and forced her through the surf at the landing-place showed, however, that they were not wanting in physical strength and pluck.

Mr. Hunter continued thus:—"Lax in morals, weak in intellect, they are fast degenerating; and unless something is speedily done to alter their condition, they will probably drift into hopeless imbecility." Thursday October Christian, a grandson of the original Fletcher Christian, said that he thought the island could support a schooner if it was supplied to them. Arrowroot, oranges, limejuice, and coffee were the articles of export that he mentioned. But Mr. Hunter fears the time has passed for any such venture. Though so closely connected with each other by inter-marriage, the islanders seemed to him to be losing their old spirit of cohesion, and ill-feeling existed between the two principal families—the Christians and the Youngs. M'Coy, the President of the governing body, complained bitterly of his waning power over the people. Upon the suggestion made by Captain Doughty in 1884, to send an ex-naval officer to take charge, Mr. Hunter thinks it might have been of some benefit fourteen years ago but fears it would now be a hopeless, heart-breaking task. In his opinion, the only way to save them is to remove them to some other place, and he suggests that, if they were given a block of land in Fiji, they would ere long become useful settlers. Mr. Hunter considers that if this is not feasible, steps should be taken to place them in constant and regular communication with Tahiti, so that the younger members of the community would have an opportunity of leaving the island. "If," (he concludes) "they are allowed to continue drifting as they are, they will probably end in hopeless imbecility."

Commenting on this report Sir G. T. O'Brien expresses the opinion that it is not desirable to import Pitcairn Islanders into Fiji, their habits and intellectual grade not being such as to make it at all likely that they would be able to earn their living there. Moreover, he says the climate of Fiji is not one in which white men can work for any length of time at agricultural pursuits or permanently reside, and the upshot of the importation, if attempted, would be prejudicial to the Islanders, and would ultimately result in their becoming a burden on the colony. On the feasibility of the other alternative suggested by Mr. Hunter, that they should be provided with means of visiting Tahiti, he declines to express any opinion, but mentions that it has occurred to him in reading the history of the case that the best solution of the difficulty might possibly be found in deporting them to Norfolk Island.

In acknowledging these despatches Mr. Chamberlain observes that to deport the inhabitants to Norfolk Island would be impossible. Apart from the fact that the Pitcairn Islanders have expressed no wish for their removal, the present state of Norfolk Island would not, says the Colonial Secretary, warrant such a measure. In these circumstances, he desired Sir G. T. O'Brien to endeavor to ascertain the possibilities of opening up communication with Tahiti.

Cutting from the DAILY TELEGRAPH

24th March 1899

25th March 1899

THE PITCAIRN ISLANDERS.

A REMARKABLE DECADENCE.

The romantic story of the Mutiny of the Bounty was better known to the young folks of the last generation than it is to those of to-day. Correspondence relating to the condition of the Pitcairn Islanders has been issued as a Parliamentary paper. Her Majesty's ship Comus visited the island in November, 1897, and Captain Dyke reports:—

"The population is now 149, having increased from 136 in 1894. During the last 18 months there have been seven births, one death from natural causes, and two murders. The people all seem happy and contented with their lot, poor as it is. Meat, except chicken, which is not much cared for, is unknown. All the bullocks were unwisely killed years ago. Sheep will not thrive at all. The island is overrun with chickens, which have become almost wild. There is no liquor in the island, and smoking is unknown. Tea, coffee, &c., also they never have, using water only.

NEW GOVERNING BODY.

"A new governing body of seven is elected on January 1 of each year, women and men all voting alike. The seven selected nominate one of their own number to be chairman. The organ taken to the island in her Majesty's ship Opal in 1879, as a present from her Majesty Queen Victoria, is now nearly worn out owing to the damp climate. As to literature, the people have little or none; in fact, they refused what was offered them. They do absolutely nothing all day. I was told that the morals of the community are not what they should be. In conclusion, I have no hesitation in saying that soon the question will have to be faced: Are they to continue as they are, viz., marrying among themselves and increasing? The slender resources they have will not stand a much greater population, and among the young men a desire is evinced to leave the island."

In forwarding the report, Rear-Admiral Palliser suggests the appointment of a Governor, and attributes the lack of moral fibre to the absence of discipline and incentive to work.

These communications were forwarded by Mr. Chamberlain to Sir G. T. M. O'Brien, High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, who, replying on October 25, 1898, wrote:—

"I took advantage of Mr. Hunter's recent visit to Pitcairn Island, in the capacity of Judicial Commissioner, to ask him to report generally on the condition of the islanders, and to suggest any measures that might appear feasible to him, with a view to their improvement; and I now enclose a copy of a report I have received from him on the subject.

IMBECILITY IMPENDING.

"It will be seen that he is of opinion that if the status quo be allowed to continue the islanders will gradually drift into imbecility, and he suggests that they should either be brought to Fiji or afforded opportunities for visiting Tahiti. As regards the former alternative, I have consulted my Executive Council, and they are unanimously of the opinion, in which I fully concur, that it is not desirable to import the Pitcairn Islanders or any of them into this colony. The habits and intellectual grade of the islanders are not such as to make it at all likely that they would be able to earn their living here. The climate of Fiji is not one in which white men can work for any length of time at agricultural pursuits or permanently reside, and the upshot of the importation, if it were attempted, would be prejudicial to the islanders, and would ultimately result in their becoming a burden on the colony. On the feasibility of the other alternative suggested by Mr. Hunter, that they should be provided with means of visiting Tahiti, I am not in a position to express any opinion; but I may mention that it has occurred to me, in reading the history of the case, that the best solution of the difficulty might possibly be found in deporting them to Norfolk Island."

Mr. Hamilton Hunter in his report traces the history of the Pitcairn Islanders back to 1859, and says:—"On January 17 in that year the first of the discontented few who left Norfolk Island returned to Pitcairn. This party consisted of 2 women, 2 men, and 12 children. A second party of 4 men, 6 women, and 17 children returned February 2, 1864; thus the total number of the population at that date was approximately 43 souls—viz., 6 men, 8 women, and 29 children. They consisted of 22 Youngs, 11 Christians, 6 M'Coys, 2 Warrens, and 2 Buffets.

Copy.



Norfolk Island,
20th December 1898.

The Right Honourable
Joseph Chamberlain,

Sir,

I have been informed that one of the Admirals on the Pacific Station advocated the removal of some of the inhabitants of Pitcairn Island to some other Island in the Pacific Seas. I beg to say that two of the families, namely Simeon Young and Mayhew's children are entitled to about 50 acres upon this Island. Some arrangement could be come to by those parties who are desirous of emigrating to Norfolk Island.

Simeon Young was one of those who returned to Pitcairn, after he had received a Crown Grant for 50 on Norfolk Island. The children after his death sold half of the land leaving the other half for future operations.

Mayhew Young acquired his part through his brother (half) Matthew Quintal, who died leaving half his land to his half brother or children who may return to Norfolk Island.

If, at any time, my services are required in this matter,

I

I shall be glad to act free of costs.

I remain,

(Sgd) O. M. Quintal.