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A PROTECTORATE.

The Hervey or Cook Group.

The Acting Consul at Raratonga, Mr. Exham, received authority by the S. S. Richmond to proclaim a British protectorate over Raratonga and all the islands of the Hervey group, and the Queen's flag was hoisted at noon on September 20th. Mr. Exham's instructions were to recognize the authority of the three Queens of the group, and also to recognize the chiefs there. The inhabitants were notified that the ceremony would take place at noon on September 20th, and the principal chiefs from all parts of the group assembled at Queen Makea's residence. The following proclamation was read, boih in English and in the Native language, and it was affixed to the Queen's flagstaff:

"Proclamation. By virtue of instructions received from Her Britannie Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, contained in a despatch from Sir James Prendergast, Deputy Governor of New Zealand, dated Government House, New Zealand, August 16, 1888, I hereby declare that Her Britannic Majesty's Government has this day assured a protectorate of the group of islands known as the Hervey (or Cook's) group, situated in the South Pacific Ocean, between 18 deg. and 22 deg. south latitude, and 156 deg. and 160 deg. west longitude, and that the following islands are included in such protectorate: Raratonga, Maingaia, Aitutaki, Atiu, Taoki, Mitiaro, Manuae, and all the small islands or isless depending on them. Dated at Her Britannic Majesty's Consulate, Raratonga, this 20th day of September, 1888. RICHARD EXHAM, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul. God Save the Queen."

The three great chiefs were then presented with the British flag, which they were authorized to hoist on their flag staffs, and they were informed that under the protection of this flag they would be in no way molested or interfered with by foreign warships.

[Southeast of Samoa about 700 miles is the scattered Hervey or Cook Archipelago, consisting of nine islands, either volcanic or coralline, and rendered difficult of access by dangerous reefs and the absence of harbors. Raratonga, the largest, is volcanic and hilly, with fertile and well-watered valleys. The islands produce cocoa-nuts, bread-fruit, bananas, coffee, cotton and tobacco. The natives of the group are now in an advanced state of civilization. They all read the Bible, dress after the European fashion, and live in stone dwellings grouped in little townships under separate chiefs. They seem, however, to be rapidly diminishing in number, the present population being perhaps ten thousand, of whom six thousand are in Raratonga alone. They petitioned in 1864 for annexation to Great Britain. It is a curious fact that in Oparo, a small, sterile island, there are the remains of native forts of hewn stone on the summits of the highest hills. The stones are well squared and smoothed, and joined with a hard cement. Some of them are two tons weight. The natives have a legend .

of a migration from Samoa.] Admiral Fairfax, with the Calliope and Lizard, left Tonga for Samoa, intending to call at Nin or Savage Island, and establish a protectorate over that island, in compliance with a request from the natives there.

It is reported that Captain Aldiner, during his late cruise, has succeeded in making one of the deepest soundings that has ever been made, at a few miles off Kaafa or Pylstaart Island, the most southern island of the Tongan Group. He obtained soundings of 4,228 fathoms.

Advertisements

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