

In June, the Magistrate paid a visit to the Triobriand Archipelago, and found the state of affairs there on the whole satisfactory. There had been a good deal of sickness amongst the natives. Their yam crop, which promised to be excellent, turned out very poorly, owing to unfavorable weather. This group is the chief yam-producing locality of the Possession. Generally, they have enough for themselves and a large quantity for sale. Some natives who had been led to commit suicide, had not chosen to adopt the time-honoured method of climbing to the top of a high tree, and then springing off it, but had taken poison. They chewed and swallowed the leaves of a plant which they use in very shallow water for stupefying fish. The poison is not very virulent. However, some of them managed to kill themselves with it. Two others were treated by the Rev. M. H. Gilmour, the resident missionary, and recovered. As natives that commit suicide, as a rule, only do so whilst under the temporary influence of some passion, the two would-be self-destroyers probably did not regret that their attempts to kill themselves had been frustrated. In some parts of the Possession, the natives believe that one leaf of the plant in question, if it be charged with magic, will kill any person that swallows it. The use of this leaf by the suicides, simply as a poison and its use as the medium for conveying an evil charm, seems to point to the fact that natives are not, as a rule, acquainted with plants, or natural substances, possessing more poisonous properties than this leaf does. Many people believe that the natives of British New Guinea know and make use of deadly poisons ; but it cannot be said that any satisfactory proof of this has yet been established.

There were 300 natives on Woodlark Island, employed in connexion with the gold mines, and in the same township adjacent thereto. All these natives came from other parts of the Possession, and under written contracts. The pay is good, and the rations liberal, and they like the work. The natives of Woodlark Island itself have not shown much desire to work for Europeans on that island ; but they work for the Government and also bring produce for sale to the township. Most of their villages are distant from the mines, being situated in that portion of the island which is all coral, and does not contain gold.

The station at Bonagai has been improved. Up to the present, the officers have only had native materials to build with, which in the moist climate of the island perish quickly. The island appears to have more than its share of destructive insects. The rather shallow muddy bay, which constitutes the harbor for the mining district, seems to be teeming with cobra, judging by the fate of a wooden jetty which was erected at the foot of the station hill. A new jetty of stones is to be substituted for the destroyed wooden one.

NORTH-EASTERN DIVISION.

During the last three months of the financial year, Mr. Monckton, the Resident Magistrate, was absent from the country on leave ; and whilst he was away the district was under the charge of Mr. Oelrichs, the Assistant Magistrate.

The Resident Magistrate believes that amongst the tribes lying to the south of Cape Nelson, inter-tribal fighting has become a thing of the past. These tribes are now looked after by their own village constables, who as a rule were their leading men, and hence possessed some authority amongst them, even before the weight of Government support was thrown into the scale. Most of these constables have turned out well, and have been of much use in maintaining order. A culprit in most parts of British New Guinea can without much difficulty elude the search made for him by a party of the armed native constabulary, who are strangers to his district ; but it is otherwise when the pursuit is by members of his own tribe headed by the village constable. In the Magistrate's report, a striking instance is given of the native view of the responsibility of the family for the act of a member of the family. In many cases the tribe is regarded as responsible for the act of a member of the tribe. From the first this has been a difficulty in the path of the Government. Great care has been taken to impress upon the natives that it is only the man that does the wrong that will be made to suffer for it. But as this idea of collective responsibility appears to have been common to most races of men at a certain stage in their development, it is very difficult to eradicate it from the mind of the Papuan. The native perceives that as the Government only punish the wrong-doer, they mean what they say ; but the native fails to see that the view

that the Government take is a right one. He naturally thinks that his view is the right one, and perhaps doubts whether the ideas of the Government are not erratic and temporary. At all events, he frequently acts as if he suspected that the Government would on the next occasion make the family or the tribe responsible. When a European first comes to New Guinea, the native strikes him as a being whose ideas it will be very easy to alter; but after the European has been here some time, he probably concludes that the Papuan is another illustration of the fact that sometimes the cruder a man's ideas about anything are, the more he clings to them.

The Magistrate is inclined to think that imprisonment for a short period does not deter cases, such as adultery, as effectually as did the native method of the club or the spear. This view of the matter is very likely correct, but between the two evils of homicide and adultery, it is better to choose the lesser one. The imprisonment of the culprit pacifies the wronged husband, because, except in the case of a blood feud, vindictiveness soon dies out of the heart of a native. It need perhaps hardly be said that the Magistrate does not approve of the native method of suppressing adultery.

In addition to minor trips made by the Resident and the Assistant Magistrates, the former carried out two special expeditions during the year. The first was against some tribes living near Oro Bay, to the north of Cape Nelson. This bellicose tribe had raided some villages on the northern slopes of the Cape Nelson peninsula, not far from the station, and killed some of their inhabitants. On the arrival of the Government party at the mouth of a small river, not far from the villages of the offenders, the latter made a bold attack in the night time on the camp, but were repulsed with heavy loss. The party then proceeded inland to the villages of these hostile natives, and after a slight skirmish captured their head chief and several others. These were taken to the station at Cape Nelson, and after a while released, and sent home with clearer ideas than they possessed as to the power of the Government, and the wish of the Government to be friendly with all natives who showed a disposition to behave properly.

The other expedition was up the Musa River to its head-waters, where a small party of prospecting miners had got into difficulties with the natives, and had had much of their property stolen. The expedition was successful in extracting the miners from the predicament they had got into, and a detachment of constabulary was left with them, who stayed until the prospecting party gave up their fruitless quest for gold.

The pioneer gold miner is, no doubt, a very worthy and useful member of the community, but he can hardly hope to be regarded by officers in charge of out-stations in this country with unqualified approbation, at least when he is rambling about in the wilder portions of the district that is under the charge of those officers.

NORTHERN DIVISION.

Owing to the death on the 20th June, 1902, of Mr. A. L. Walker, the Resident Magistrate of the Division, an annual report on its affairs has not been furnished. The natives in the eastern and north-eastern portions of the district have at times shown hostility, and at the beginning of the year they still rendered the road between the station at Bogi on the Kumusi and the Yodda gold-field, somewhat unsafe for travellers. The Resident Magistrate then established a post at Papangi, on the upper Kumusi, about mid-way between Bogi and the gold-fields, and placed Mr. de Moleyns, Assistant Magistrate, with a detachment of constabulary, in charge of it. The establishment of this post led to beneficial results. It deterred the natives from attacking travellers, and it gave the Magistrate in charge of it time and opportunity to get into communication with them. After a while many of the natives, finding that the Government did not wish to harm them, became more or less friendly.

It occurred to the Resident Magistrate that a shorter road from the sea-coast to the gold workings in the Yodda Valley than the one in use, might be found. The present route from the mouth of the Kumusi to the Yodda Valley is partly by water and partly by land. Steam launches can reach Bogi, some 50 miles up the river, in two days. The station and the trading stores from which the miners get their supplies are at Bogi. From Bogi there is a track to Papangi, on the upper Kumusi, which more or less skirts the river. Above Bogi the

Suppression of adultery.

Oro Bay natives.

Difficulties of prospecting miners.

Death of Resident Magistrate.

Yodda Valley.