

THE QUEENSLAND "SLAVE-TRADE."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE AGE.

Sir,—As I expected, the plain spoken letter of Mr. Geo. Morrison has provoked replies from many quarters. You would be doing me a favor if you could find space for the insertion of one more reply. I have been for many years in the South Seas, both as a resident and a trader, and have also been in the labor trade or slave trade or blackbird trade or whatever you like to call it. In the labor trade I was mate on board two schooners, one under the English flag, the other under the French, and I have taken labor to almost every market about these parts of the globe. Now, Sir, my experience coincides exactly with that of Mr. Morrison. He tells a plain unvarnished tale, and a very mildly put tale; in fact, he lets the trade down softly. There are, however, some statements new to me, or that at any rate never came under my notice, nor was I ever informed of such doings. For instance, the shooting of a native attempting to swim ashore. Again, he states that traders land the natives at the wrong islands to avoid expense. Now any trader who wanted to make a second trip in the trade would not do this, because (if returning his own recruits) he would find it difficult to get a fresh supply if all the old boys did not turn up. It is sometimes a matter of great difficulty to find the present abode of the relatives of a man who has been away for three years, for war or family feuds may have caused them to shift their quarters. I have had men on board who, after long search, could not find their homes, and preferred returning to going ashore. Then, again, one craft takes boys away, another returns them, and perhaps passes to windward of an island when the boys' home is to leeward.—Of course the poor fellows can't see their home, though it is their island. So they are knocked on the head as soon as the boat leaves the shore, and their three years' wages (scanty enough from some places) divided among the murderers. Mr. Morrison's remarks about the women are perfectly true; but then again, ladies in those sunny parts have many of the faults of those in other climes, among them that of frequently running away from their husbands. I remember once seeing swimming off on board late at night, stating they wanted to serve and go away, because their husbands beat them and made them work too hard. They came away with us. Some time after I met a Queensland labor craft, and the skipper informed me that he had on board four men going to Queensland to look for their wives, whom he informed them had gone to Brisbane with me. I was not trading there at all then. There is also not a doubt but that the Government agents do all they can to fill up quickly. They are often the best recruiting men themselves. As for the feeding of the natives, I have always seen them well fed on these vessels. Any native will use the word steal in reference to his abduction; it has got to be the expression used, signifying, as often as not, simply that such a skipper "took me away." I am very much in favor of the natives having rifles, muskets, &c., and using them; they are, on the whole, far less dangerous than the deadly poisoned weapons in use among the islanders. In conclusion, I do not see exactly why Mr. Morrison, with his experience, should pitch on Queensland as the colony where natives are abused. Wherever the luckless natives have been taken to, Fiji, Queensland, or New Caledonia, some have been shamefully treated, others just the contrary. One word more and I have done.—I refer to the missionaries. If this should meet the eye of any of those rev. gentlemen, I beg to state once and for all distinctly that I have many acts to be grateful to those gentlemen for, but I cannot advocate the cause of the missions so far as I have seen them from 1857 to date. I consider them a gigantic failure, the result being lamentably disproportionate to the outlay of life, brain and money. One matter I would earnestly ask those gentlemen to put a stop to at once. The marriage of white women to the princes and subjects of the sunny isles. The mode of life, the filthy and degraded morals of some of those islands should be sufficient to deter any man acquainted with the inner life of the noble savages from joining the two races at the altar.—Yours, &c.

Bahakava, 10th May,

MALICOLOR.