

## The Annexation of New Guinea.

(COMMUNICATED.)

It is quite evident, from the official papers lately published, that the sudden annexation of New Guinea by our Government was prompted by a fear of Germany taking possession. How utterly groundless such an assumption has been events have proved. The German Press appears scarcely to have noticed the act.

Some time ago, towards the end of last year, the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, the paper generally accredited to be Prince Bismarck's special organ, contained a full translation of a leading article of the *Brisbane Courier*, in which the latter then advocated the annexation of New Guinea, of the New Hebrides, &c. The comment came at the end, and was very pithy; it simply stated that Germany's policy in the South Seas had not been, and would not be, altered. It referred to this policy as exemplified at Samoa and the Tonga Islands, in both of which groups the policy and action of Germany had, at any rate, greatly assisted in raising the indigenous race to some self-organisation and local development of civilisation. It may here be added that in Samoa the German Empire possesses a harbour, that is a space covered by water, which was purchased from the surrounding tribes. At Tonga, the German Empire likewise possesses a coaling station. But in both groups the German Empire does not hold a single inch of soil, and has always refused territorial rights.

This policy has been further extended by the German Empire to other groups, notably to the New Britain and New Ireland groups and to Micronesia. At the Duke of York Island, an island lying in the passage between New Britain and New Ireland, the German Empire likewise possesses a harbour, purchased from the natives. At Jaluit, in the Marshall group, the same action has been pursued, and though the extensive German firm which has factories there sees its craft on a small space of German water in front, the land on which the buildings are situated is not German.

In the discussion which the colonial Press has published on the subject nothing whatever has been said as yet of the extensive interests enjoyed, particularly by German firms, in the Papuan Archipelago. Numerous German trading establishments are scattered throughout the Solomon Group, the groups further north, and as far as the Hermit Islands. Some time ago the writer was credibly informed that German trading stations had been established on the north-east coast of New Guinea, about the Huon Gulf and the Astrolabe Gulf, therefore within the territory lately annexed by Queensland.

The fact seems also to have been forgotten by the colonial Press, that the French flag has once waved over Rook Island, in the narrow passage between New Britain and New Guinea, for the protection of a settlement of

Guinea, for the protection of a settlement of Italian missionaries of the Society of Jesus, since abandoned.

When the Marquis de Ray entered on his mad expedition to New Ireland it was currently stated in the Press that he had sought and obtained the protectorate of Spain over the colonies he might found. The old claims of Spain in these regions no doubt are quiescent.

It would therefore appear very probable that old and recent interests of more than one European Power, not to mention Italy, which seems to consider the discoveries of D'Albertis and Beccari worthy of some regard, will not be quietly abandoned. The policy of Germany, and which after all has also lately been the policy of Great Britain in these parts, would seem to be the most practicable and the least dangerous to Australia. We should use every endeavour to prevent the establishment of convict settlements in our neighbourhood, and should likewise use every means to discourage proceedings which may lead to military establishments pure and simple in Australian waters. And what more effective means can be placed at our hands than a joint control of the civilised Powers in the South Sea Islands and a common accord by which the Pacific shall be declared neutral water? This solution, so easy and already so strongly supported by Germany, would give us all the security we ask, and a good deal more. It would prevent convict establishments, and in time of war give complete quietness and peace over the expanse of water washing our shores.