

at the same time pointing out what I considered to be the main causes of the spread of a fell disease which appeared to confine itself entirely to people of the Native race. I have generally met with a sort of apathetic acquiescence and agreement with my views and suggestions, and sometimes with a few promises of improvement; but the result cannot be described as anything but discouraging. It would be almost necessary to change the entire nature of a Maori to effect any voluntary improvement in his social and domestic habits. His present style of life is part and parcel of his nature, and it cannot but be apparent to any person brought even into casual contact with him that the effect is highly demoralizing. Men, women, and children crowd into a small whare where two or three may be lying sick, almost unto death, of the fever; and there they remain for hours, talking, eating, smoking, and sleeping, in an atmosphere that no ordinary mortal could breathe in. When a death occurs it is the same thing over again. The corpse, reeking with contagion, is surrounded by lamenting relatives and friends, who oftentimes will embrace the body in a transport of grief. This continues for hours, and the same thing occurs constantly. What can one hope to do with people who are so foolish as to persist in a course which can only be described as suicidal in the extreme? This is no overdrawn picture, but a simple statement of what has come under my own observation. The majority of the whares have no ventilation at all, and not the slightest attempt is made to purify the atmosphere. When a patient is very feverish and restless he will be sometimes carried outside and laid down in a cool spot, but without regard to draught or damp. I have known too of instances where a patient raging with fever has been carried by his friends and placed in a cold running stream of water, according to the advice of some ignorant *tohunga*. The result may be imagined. When remonstrated with on the subject, the reply would generally be something based on a superstitious idea.

There is no difficulty in inducing the Natives to take the various medicines prescribed for them, but it is quite hopeless to expect them to carry out the instructions which may accompany the doses. Then again, with regard to diet, it is always either a famine or a feast, and, though instructions are constantly given as to the most suitable kinds of food for invalids, they seem to attach very little importance to this subject. In many cases, in the first stage of convalescence, when the patient is extremely weak and low, and requires all possible nourishment, the only food given is often the most unsuitable. Bad food and scanty clothing are fruitful sources of disease amongst the children.

Considerable notice has been attracted of late to the prevailing epidemic amongst the Maoris, by articles and letters which have appeared from time to time in the public Press. The state of things is bad enough, but not nearly so dreadful as some people would wish to represent it to be. Excellent leading articles have appeared on the subject in the *New Zealand Herald*, and even the Natives have had their notice drawn to them. On one occasion lately I saw a Native lad, able to read English, translating portions of an article on the epidemic in the *New Zealand Herald* to some other Natives, and they appeared to be greatly interested. All reasonable efforts have been made to mitigate the evils arising from the fever, and to check its spread; and, though these may have failed to a great extent, it appears to me unreasonable to say, without due knowledge of the facts, that the welfare of the Maoris as a people is being neglected.

The poverty of the Natives in this district is very apparent at the present time. Kauri gum is getting somewhat scarce in the immediate neighbourhood of the settlements, and to procure it in payable quantities the diggers have to go farther afield. Prices have been ruling somewhat low compared with those of late years, and the Natives have not the same inducement to dig. Work in the kauri bushes and elsewhere has been plentiful, and the wages high, but Maoris are not suited for constant labour. They are fond of change and novelty, and cannot be induced to remain long at any settled employment. Those of them who form the exception to the rule are doing well; they live in comfortable weatherboard houses, and have all the appearance of thoroughly enjoying the many advantages of civilization.

Whaling was carried on with great spirit during the season, but very indifferent success was met with. Only one whale was captured, and the yield of oil was comparatively small. There are now eight boats on the coast, fully equipped, and entirely owned by Natives. The industry does not in any way prove a profitable undertaking to those interested, but there is a tinge of excitement about it which makes it very attractive to the Maoris.

Many meetings, political and other, have been held during the past year in various parts of the northern district, and the consequent waste of food and time has been considerable. To provide a great display at these meetings the Natives unhesitatingly impoverish and starve themselves for months afterwards, and it is lamentable to see those whose families are destitute of the common necessities of life making large presents in money and goods to a lot of people, the majority of whom attend these meetings with no other objects than to feed heartily and to carry away all they can get.

A large meeting was lately held at the Bay of Islands in connection with the Treaty of Waitangi. Large numbers of Natives attended from all parts of this district, and various questions were discussed affecting the Native race. A most unhealthy agitation is being kept alive amongst them by those who have personal ends to gain, and, though time will serve to put things in their proper light, in the meantime a feeling of unrest and dissatisfaction pervades the Maori mind. In connection with this Treaty of Waitangi a committee has been appointed endowed by general consent with large judicial powers, and members travel round the northern