

They are also good sailors. Their houses are of rubble coral stone, smoothly plastered with the lime which they make from coral. In habits they are very cleanly wherever water is obtainable, and in all cases keep their villages in excellent order. Furniture has not yet come into use with the people generally. The houses of the Arikis are two-storied, with balconies, the walls solid and thick, the rooms lofty, large, and well furnished. This may be judged from the Council being able to meet in Makea's drawing-room, with ample space for the general public as well.

*The Currency* is the Chilian dollar, which, by its inferiority and consequent cheapness, has driven all other coin out of the islands. This dollar has been as low in value as 2s. 6d. for export, though current at 4s. in the islands. British coins are highly valued, and their substitution is much required. This would involve a rearrangement of all fixed rentals and agreements, as well as of wages and prices generally.

*Climate.*—Good and dry in all the islands, as has been already stated. During the wet season (December to March, both inclusive) violent gales are not unusual, but it is said there has been no hurricane since 1867. The gales are very local. When I arrived at Aitutaki the people were suffering from a severe gale which had done much damage, though only of a few hours' duration. The steamer "Richmond," on her way from Tahiti, suffered from the same gale. The native schooner "Araura," formerly the "Julia Price," of Auckland, was capsized off Aitutaki, and in her and two small canoes swamped at the same time fourteen lives were lost. At Atiu and Mangaia the gale was also severe, but at Rarotonga, where I was at the time, it was scarcely felt. It may be interesting to give here the barometer-readings and other particulars, as stated to me by the Rev. W. Lawrence, of Aitutaki, in reference to the gale at that place. From Sunday till Thursday, 20th November, the barometer stood at 29 with little variation. Little wind, but much rain, during this time. On Thursday, at 1 p.m., suddenly rose to 29.90, and at 2 the gale was blowing furiously, with very little rain. At half-past 2 the barometer began to fall, and stood at 29.80. At 3 it was at 29.70, and at half-past 3 29.60. At that time the gale had decreased, and by 4 o'clock was pretty well over. By 5 the barometer had fallen to 29.49, and then began to rise quickly. By 8 it was again at 29.80, and the night, after 10, beautifully fine with a clear sky. Next morning the barometer stood at 30. Large trees were blown down, and the Market-house, near the shore, with about 5 tons of copra and other produce awaiting shipment, was swept away by the sea. The mischief was done by occasional furious squalls, which were a marked feature of the gale.

*Diseases.*—There are no fevers, but the natives suffer from dysentery, which occasionally kills considerable numbers. Thirty deaths had occurred at Aitutaki from this cause during the fortnight before my arrival at that island. This is attributed to drinking impure water and taking food (animal and vegetable) when it would be considered by Europeans unfit for use. There is no vaccination. Fortunately, small-pox has not yet appeared, but vaccination should be immediately attended to. The missionary, in addition to his other duties, has to act as medical attendant to every one, native or European, on his island. Of leprosy all have a great dread. At Penrhyn—an atoll over six hundred miles distant to the north, and not belonging to the Cook Group—ten cases were found by the Rev. J. Hutchin on his recent visit of inspection. This atoll of Penrhyn is inhabited by a kindred Maori race, and was lately annexed as British territory. Mr. Hutchin has reported the existence of leprosy to the London Missionary Society, and it will also, I believe, be reported to the Imperial naval authorities in Sydney. The disease is said to have been introduced by Penrhyn natives returning from Hawaii.

One case only of supposed leprosy has occurred at Rarotonga. The case was that of a Chinaman, whose countrymen fed him for several months in an isolated hut, with all due precautions. At last he was reported dead, and naturally, under such circumstances, in a very shocking condition. They bargained with some natives for his burial. It was conducted with every possible precaution also; but there is too much reason to believe that the poor creature was not actually dead, and that his cries were heard as the earth was thrown in upon him.

The cases at Penrhyn and the supposed case at Rarotonga have caused a great desire to prevent any influx of Chinamen, to whom the disease is attributed. The Council are anxious to prevent any more Chinese settling in the group, and are determined, if possible, to do so. I am sorry to add that venereal is also prevalent throughout the group.

*Birds* are few, excepting sea-birds. Some Californian quail, sent to Rarotonga by Sir George Grey, are likely to thrive. They will be much needed, and others will be needed with them, to keep insect-life within due bounds. A wasp, or hornet (South American), has found its way *via* Tahiti. While destroying large numbers of caterpillars, the wasp is itself becoming a serious nuisance to cotton-pickers and others who interfere with its peace and comfort by disturbing the nests with which the trees are infested. This wasp stings severely. It also builds elaborate nests or hives in every part of a house that may offer a convenient place for settlement.

*Statistics.*—In the appendix will be found tables for 1889 and 1890, kindly compiled for me by Mr. Exham, the Acting British Consul. The shipping is therein stated to have been, for 1890, as follows: Arrivals, 71 vessels, with a total of 13,315 tons; departures, 70, with a total of 13,302 tons. Of the arrivals, 52 were British, 12 American, 4 French, and 3 Native vessels.

*Imports and Exports* are stated in detail in the same tables. Together they amount to £50,541 for the year 1890. The exports were £20,373. It is believed that with proper care and cultivation they could be increased to £150,000 in a few years, and that the imports would increase in proportion. The bulk of the trade is with New Zealand. A differential duty in favour of island coffee, or its admission duty-free, would bring all of this staple to New Zealand, and with it the rest of the trade which is now competed for by San Francisco and Tahiti.