

whether there is any increase in the number of children since the previous census. The comparative Table A attached hereto shows the number of persons under the age of fifteen at the present census to be 16,065, while in 1896 it was 14,248—an increase of 1,817 persons during the five years. Detailed tables showing the ages at classified periods will be published later on.

It was expected that the census of 1901 would disclose a substantial increase of half-castes, but this expectation has not been realised. The figures are as follows:—

Half-castes living as members of Maori tribes—

1896	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3,503
1901	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3,123

Decrease	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	380
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The explanation may lie in the fact that many half-castes are now living in European fashion, and will be included in the European census. This is more particularly apparent in the South Island, as will be seen on reference to the report of Mr. Bishop, S.M., the Enumerator for Canterbury, Otago, and Westland.

It would be dangerous, I think, to build any elaborate theories on the result of the late census. The evidence seems to indicate that the Maori population is nearly stationary; but, even on that assumption, it must be a matter of sincere congratulation to be able to hope that the decline of the race has been stayed. It remains to be seen whether education and more enlightened conditions of life will lead the Maori up the path of progress, as well in numbers as in mental equipment and material comfort.

The health of the Natives has been generally good. There have been occasional outbreaks of typhoid and other fevers, influenza, and kindred disorders, but there has been no epidemic of disease. In all cases of serious outbreak that have been reported, the Government has promptly sent medical assistance, and has also supplied medical comforts and suitable food, at the discretion of the medical attendant. In one or two cases where it was necessary to isolate the patients, the Government has also provided nursing assistance. There are now twenty-four medical officers in the colony, subsidised from the Native Civil List, together with five “dispensers” in districts where no medical men reside, and who, though not legally qualified to practice medicine, are quite able to dispense simple remedies for minor complaints. The duties of these officers are to treat and prescribe for every Native who may visit them at their surgeries, and to visit all patients who, through age or illness, are unable to come to them. In addition, the services of the Native-school teachers are largely utilised in the same work. The department provides these teachers with a selection of useful medicines, with simple directions as to their use, and there is every reason to believe that by their efforts much suffering is spared, and many outbreaks suppressed. The good work performed by these ladies and gentlemen is deserving of notice, all the more so that it has not received due recognition in the past. The sum expended last year under the head of “Medical attendance, medicines, &c.,” amounted to £1,776. From the reports received by the department, it would appear that the Maoris suffer most from coughs, colds, and various forms of influenza and fever. The causes contributing to the prevalence of these complaints may be attributed principally to the unhealthy positions in which settlements of Natives are often found, their mode of life, their indifference to the insanitary condition and surroundings of their dwelling-places, and last, but not least, a polluted water-supply.

As a knowledge of sanitary laws increases among the Maoris, it may be expected that these causes of disease will gradually disappear. But it is useless to expect the social habits of a people to conform to another standard all at once. While it is true that social conditions are susceptible of almost infinite modification, it is equally true that such modification can occur only after long periods of time. I have heard it said, that “It is useless to try to do anything for Maoris, as they will not do what they are told.” They are blamed for living on low-lying ground, for wearing European clothing, for allowing drainage to flow to their water-supply, and for giving unsuitable food to their children and invalids, while it is almost a crime to hand over the treatment of the sick to their *tohungas*. Such criticisms are, in a sense, quite true, but they result from a failure to realise the mental attitude of the Maori. He has had no systematic training, but has picked up European customs and ideas just as it pleased him, and just so far as it pleased him, and he has not yet been built up to the stage where progress to a higher social development becomes a purpose of life. It is unreasonable, therefore, to expect from him an immediate response to the demands of our modern civilization, which has been evolved after centuries of progress. He must have time and opportunity, and our teaching must be measured by his capacity. We must not complain that he feeds his infants on pork and potatoes, and at the same time offer him an indigestible mental diet of nineteenth-century science.

The diffusion of knowledge must tend to uplift the Maori. The transforming powers of education and association are at work, and must in time have their effect. The village schools are steadily improving the general standard of knowledge among the Maori people as a whole, while the higher schools turn out a number of intelligent young fellows who want only the opportunity to show the value of the training they have received. Suitable openings in the public service are limited, but the Government has displayed a sympathetic regard for deserving Maori youths wherever possible. There are now two Native medical students attending the Otago University, and the recent appointment of Dr. Pomare as Native Health Officer is expected to do much good in the direction of sanitary and social reform. Much also is hoped from the Maori Councils Act of last session, which confers on the Natives a limited measure of local self-government, and enables them to regulate and control habits and customs which are harmful alike to the individual and the community. Many of the older chiefs, as well as the educated younger generation, are showing a very intelligent interest in the reform movement, but they want to be shown what to do and how to do it.