

The effect of this system is undoubtedly good, and the Natives, by coming in contact with competent European doctors, and obtaining their medicines and advice, are gradually falling away from *tohungas*, with their incantations and ceremonial *rururis*, and becoming more Europeanised in their style of living. From what little knowledge of the Maori character I possess, I am satisfied that the Natives would not have dropped into the way of seeking the advice and assistance of European doctors had the Government not stepped forward with the present arrangement of Native medical officers. The thought of payment would have deterred them.

The old system by which the medical officer received a subsidy from Government to supply medicines and attendance to such Natives as were unable to pay did not work satisfactorily. It was unfair that a medical man should be called upon to fix a standard of ability to pay, and the effect of such a rule was undoubtedly to prevent a great many Natives from coming for medical assistance where they really deserved and required it.

There can be no doubt that many Natives have great faith in certain herbs and plants, as applied by themselves for some complaints, and these remedies they continue to use in some districts. On the Taheke River, Hokianga, one Hone Harris has, I find, had a large camp for some time past, and here he has bathed patients suffering from rheumatism, scrofula, and other complaints in hot baths of a decoction made from the bark, roots, and leaves of native shrubs and trees. The patients, I am informed, are not exposed to the cold air. From careful inquiry, I am satisfied that no known injury or injurious effect has so far resulted to the patients. Many of them aver that they have been much benefited by the treatment, although I am inclined to doubt this fact. I intend to visit this camp and make full inquiry at the first opportunity. This treatment can, however, scarcely be called the practice of a *tohunga*—a man who imposes on his patients' superstitions by sundry incantations and ceremonial *rururis*, giving them the belief that his power consists more in his authority from the spirits than in the direct power of the cold-water treatment itself, which is generally attended by such gross exposure to the cold air that serious results ensue.

The incantations and *rurururis* are often full of disgusting expressions and suggestions. Only one summary prosecution of a *tohunga* has occurred in this district during the past year, and, as a conviction followed, and the *tohunga*, his *mana* destroyed, left the district, I trust that *tohungas* are falling into disrepute with the Maoris.

My sub-enumerators, as well as many others, inform me that they have been much impressed with the great number of young children at all the settlements, and with the general healthy appearance of such children. The returns of 1896 show 2,705 children under the age of fifteen years. The present returns show 3,412 children under the same age. There has therefore been an increase of over seven hundred children under the age of fifteen since the last census returns. It is, however, to be regretted that a great number of children of tender age, of both sexes, are acquiring the habit of cigarette-smoking, and it is to be hoped that before this vice has done much injury the Maori Councils, under the local self-government Act of the last session, will take vigorous steps to suppress it.

Influenza, a kind of low fever, and chronic cough are the principal ailments among the Natives generally, whilst the old suffer from rheumatism and lumbago, the effect of exposure and neglect during their youth. Only in one or two places have syphilitic symptoms manifested themselves from contact with the Europeans. These cases are, however, fairly isolated, and I think that there is little chance of their spreading.

One or two isolated cases of scrofula, and of consumption, brought on entirely through neglect of heavy colds, have also been reported to me, as well as a disease alleged to be brought on by eating what is known as *kaanga pirau*, or rotten corn. In the latter instance the head, arms, and legs become very much swollen. The skin becomes inflamed, and those attacked suffer severe pains, mostly in the joints. The sickness is not fatal unless the patient be greatly neglected, and it is often mistaken by the Natives for rheumatism. Fortunately this sickness is not common.

A somewhat similar, but more uncommon kind of disease, better known in former times, still exists in one or two parts of my district. It is known as *tuwhenua*, and at first sight is often diagnosed as hereditary syphilis. Those who have made a study of the subject are, however, of the opinion that it is a disease probably produced by the eating of bad fish. After the primary stage of inflammation and swelling, the extremities commence to perish and shrink away. The disease is seldom heard of, as those Natives afflicted keep out of sight.

The district is, comparatively speaking, poor, but such wealth as exists is fairly distributed. Where cases of destitution are reported, an allowance in suitable stores, up to the maximum amount of £1 per month, is, on the recommendation of the Magistrate, allowed to each such destitute Native, through some local storekeeper. This system works most satisfactorily, and would, in my opinion, prove more suitable than the Old-age Pension Act, as regards all old Natives. The goods are supplied direct to the Native himself, and consist of only such things as are necessary to relieve his distress, while, as regards the old-age pensions, money is drawn which is often spent by the younger Natives in buying useless finery for themselves, while their older relations, the pensioners, are obliged to go short of necessary articles.

Drunkenness is undoubtedly decreasing amongst the Natives. The Maori population is probably about equal to the European, yet during the past five years there have only been two convictions for drunkenness in Hokianga County, two in Whangaroa, six in Mangonui, and twenty-seven in Bay of Islands, or in all thirty-seven convictions, as against fifty-one Europeans. The provisions of "The Alcoholic Liquors Sale Control Act Amendment Act, 1895," with reference to Native women have been well carried out and enforced by the police, and the effect of some three or four convictions has been to almost completely check drunkenness amongst Native women.

The great influx of Dalmatian and other foreigners, in addition to British gum-diggers from other parts of the colony, has largely exhausted the gum supply, and during the last year gum has become so scarce that many of the Natives have given up gum-digging as a following, and have