

Some of these men had an unknown disease, which they gave to the Morioris. According to the descriptions of it I am led to believe that it was small-pox. Many of the aborigines died at this time. Then again about the years 1855–56 an epidemic broke out, which was in all probability meningitis; at any rate scores and scores of both the Moriori and Maori died. In 1866 measles appeared. It is stated by some of the old Natives that the Hauhaus brought it over; at all events many more died, probably more from the mode of treatment than the actual disease, for the cold plunge bath in some river or spring was the favourite mode of combating the disease. After this another epidemic visited the Islands, but the descriptions of it are very vague, and though it carried off many I was unable to find out what it was. In 1891 *la grippe* carried off a few more, till at the present the total Maori population does not exceed two hundred, and the Moriori but eight.

It is hoped that improved sanitary conditions will bring about a decided change, and I have no doubt it will, at least as far as the Maoris are concerned.

ALCOHOLISM.

It is most gratifying to report the steady improvement that is setting in in this respect. Many convictions have resulted in consequence of cases of drunkenness in the pas being handed to the Councils to deal with. The improvement has been quite noticeable in the Taranaki District, where once the Natives drank most excessively. There was hardly ever a tangi where large quantities of spirituous liquors were not consumed by men, women, and often children. It is somewhat different now: the wholesome fear of being fined by the Council, or locked up in gaol for failing to pay the fine, is having a good effect in stopping this great evil. It is, however, far from being entirely stopped; but the mana of the Council is being established, and drunkenness is on the decrease. There are, however, a few districts where the Maoris still drink excessively, but they take care not to return to the pas while in an intoxicated condition, as the mana of the Kaunihera is supreme there. If the European part of the community objected to have drunken Maoris parading their streets, and took steps to have them arrested every time they thus misbehaved, I think they would soon learn to dread the lock-up as they now dread being fined by the Councils. During the past year the Maoris have realised as never before the evils of alcohol, and as a result many are desirous of asking the Government to prohibit the sale of it to any Maori whatever.

The Wanganui Natives sent us a petition asking that alcohol be not sold to the Natives by the steam-packets along the river. The following was written at the time concerning the petition, and referred to the Hon. the Minister of Public Health:—

SIR,—

I have just received the attached petition from Natives living along the Wanganui River concerning the selling of liquor to Maoris on the steam-packets. The petition deals with the advisability of prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages along the river to any Maori. You will notice that it is signed by forty-three Natives.

In regard to the liquor question amongst the Maoris I think we ought to encourage sobriety wherever possible. The Maori Councils, I am pleased to state, have made a united stand in trying to root out this evil from Maori kaingas. The Natives have at last awakened to their doomed condition—the universal cry is for better things; and so at the commencement of this new-born impetus to improve themselves, and while they of their own free will so earnestly pray that the sale of liquor be prohibited to Maoris, we can only, in duty bound, lend them every available aid that is possible for us to give in order to forward them on to soberness, industry, and progress; and, mark, they were not without consideration for their pleasure-seeking white brother, for they express the wish that it be not prohibited to him; but they stipulate that should the white brother violate his bond by giving any Maori alcoholic drink, then let the sale of it be entirely stopped in the district to either Maori or pakeha.

Drink, as you are well aware, has been and is a terrible curse to the Maori. It has been the means of depriving many Natives of food, clothing, homes, and lands. It has rendered scores quite destitute of the comforts of life. It has swamped many with degradation, poverty, laziness, and disease. It has brought ruin and death, and now, in this blazing sun of civilisation and advancement, it even threatens the Maori with extinction. The Maoris have a proverb, “While the word is still warm with the breath of my body, speak.” And so, while this great desire is still within them let us speak to them by heeding this their supplication, and thus help to keep away one of their greatest enemies, alcohol.

Trusting you will look into this matter,
Dr. J. M. Mason, Chief Health Officer.

I have, &c.,
MAUI POMARE, M.D.

The subsequent action of the Wanganui Licensing Committee you are already aware of, and I need make no comment.

In regard to the King-country Maoris and alcoholism I am afraid that when the Natives do get liquor, which they quite often do in some mysterious way, it is of such a poisonous character that if it does not kill them outright it soon would do so. It makes one pause and think it would be perhaps more advantageous to have pure liquor under good control than to have as at present bad liquor under no control.

If in such districts as the Waitotara and Taranaki, where a great deal of money is annually paid to the Natives by the Public Trust Office, the money was obliged to be spent in the improving of the homes instead of being allowed to be squandered in drink, billiards, and horse-racing, it would be far more beneficial to the Natives than it is at present.

CLOSETS.

In olden days the pas were all supplied with closets, which were called *paepaes*. These were generally built at the top of some steep place, hole, or cliff, and were oftentimes elaborately carved. It was only when war ceased, and the Maoris began to descend to the low levels to live, that neglect in regard to this matter crept in.

In some localities the prejudice against closets has been so great that it was with extreme difficulty that we were able to persuade the Natives to build these much-needed houses of convenience. We have so far tried to lead and not to drive the Maoris, but the importance of this matter is so great and the safety of not only the Natives but also of the pakeha is so involved that in some districts we have now to enforce the erection of these houses. It is gratifying to note that