

Maoris are now quite awake to the importance of the matter, for at the recent General Conference of the Maori Councils a resolution to form a general by-law enforcing the erection of closets was unanimously carried.

TOHUNGAS.

Though the influence of the *tohunga* is much broken, yet the Maori mind is still steeped in superstition. We have yet to stamp this evil completely out. The open practice of dipping patients in cold streams has been almost stopped, but, like the many-headed Hydra, *tohunga*-ism has arisen in multitudinous forms, and each of the new forms is full of vitality. Of late years many *tohungas* have arisen and each has flourished awhile and then quietly died out, but the mischief which had been done still remains and is irreparable. A *tohunga* soon gathers a following. They go from pa to pa professing to cure all manner of ills. They stay long enough to eat all the food in the place, besides running the residents into debt; then they move on, carrying the germs of disease with them and leaving poverty and starvation behind. The law of hospitality is so strong among the Maoris that they would rather die than have it said of them that they turned strangers away. It is useless for me to relate the works of these *tohungas* separately, for they all more or less work upon the superstition of the Maori.

The term *tohunga* is a very broad one, and it may mean any kind of specialist. The Natives were much exercised over herbal baths a short time ago, and those who professed supreme knowledge along these lines reaped a good harvest. After considering this craze well over, we came to the conclusion that it really did good in some respects, though not from the medicinal properties of the herbs and leaves as much as the cleansing effects of the baths. In several instances we stopped the bathing because of the insanitary condition of the bathing-houses, and the filthy state of some of the baths, the same water being used for several patients. Quite an ingenious plan is that of a certain *tohunga*, who gives a warm bath without the herbs, but each *turoro* is made to throw into the bath silver or gold, and the more that is thrown in the quicker the patient recovers. *Tohunga*-ism stretches from the ancestral incantations directed to the ancient gods to the dipping of patients in cold or hot water, and down to the more modern form of mixing all the spirituous liquors known and using this mixture as a cure-all. The latest craze is the laying on of hands.

I have watched all these *tohungas* at work, and have come to the conclusion that, unless Parliament passes a stringent law prohibiting the practice of any kind of *tohunga*, we shall always have a great many Maoris dying from the effects of *tohunga*-ism. It is true that many Maoris go to *tohungas* because they have no other alternative. They either live in districts where there are no doctors, or, if they asked a doctor out, the charges are so extravagant that Maoris cannot possibly afford to pay the fees. The result is inevitable—they go to the *tohunga*. What we need to do is to pass a law to prohibit *tohunga*-ism and to subsidise properly qualified men in districts where there are no doctors; and, where this cannot be done, to have medical men make periodical visits to these localities. I was greatly gratified, at the recent meeting of the Councillors' representatives at Rotorua, to find that the Natives were quite anxious to have cottage hospitals erected in their districts, and they further desired that their daughters be educated as nurses in the way we have suggested. If hospitals were erected for them, the Maori girls taught and graduated as nurses, the doctors liberally subsidised to do Maori work, the Native lands individualised and each one made to work constantly on them, and sanitary reforms strictly carried out, I am certain the Maori would never die out.

INFANT MORTALITY.

Perhaps some would think it exaggeration to say that more than half the Maoris die before they are four years of age. This seems a serious statement to make, but it was only after very careful observation and figuring that we came to this conclusion. And one is not surprised to find this state of affairs when inquiry is made into the infant life of the Maoris. The marvel is that more do not die.

Lucky is the baby who has a mother's breast, for it at least has a better chance of living than the unfortunate baby who has to be brought up on the bottle. Thrush, gastro-enteritis, and a host of other unavoidable diseases generally snatch away the lives of these infants, who perhaps could have been saved if the mothers were enlightened as to how to feed the babies. Then, again, after the babies are weaned the food they get is very often unsuitable for such tender digestive organs as theirs. Potato, kumara, and meat of some kind is generally the fare.

The Maori hui and prolonged tangis are no doubt great curses, and are to blame in a great measure for the infant mortality. The people congregate, bringing their children with them. Their crops are often left neglected just because some *whanaunga* a hundred times removed has died, and by custom they have to attend. The result is overcrowding of badly-ventilated whares, with the resulting evils, and Tamata returns home with a bad cough, the seeds of consumption well planted in his lungs, his wife in the same way, and, alas, the poor baby almost dead with the repeated attempts on its young life by asphyxiation. They return to find their crops all spoiled, and so the winter sets in, and they have to live on half-rations. These useless hui and tangis ought all to be abolished, except when there are important matters to discuss, and then only the men should be allowed to attend, and the children should be absolutely forbidden to be taken. It is no wonder that the infant mortality is great when we have these little mites taken into badly ventilated, overcrowded, smoke-filled whares, their meals given them at irregular hours, their clothing often so scanty and ragged that it is not sufficient to keep them warm.

We have endeavoured to touch these things in our lectures, but what is really needed is to have some mother in Israel to go among the Natives to teach them how to look after the baby, how to cook for the invalid, and how to administer the simpler remedies. I am convinced that if this were done the alarming infant mortality would be greatly reduced.