

The history of leprosy in Penrhyn is a sad and interesting one. Siku was a Penrhyn Native who lived in Samoa with an Hawaiian leper for several years. He returned in 1885 to Penrhyn and there leprosy broke out on him. Since then the following have died from it: (1) Siku, male; (2) Tawitau, male; (3) Hamoto, male; (4) Sarakura, female; (5) Kopu, male; (6) Tuatahi, male; (7) Tonga, male; (8) Urungu, male; (9) Takapuata, male; (10) Toheputa, female; (11) Turua, male, (12) Torararua, male; (13) Repo, male; (14) Hio, male; (15) Rota, male; (16) Pihā, female; (17) Mama, female; (18) Ruaputa, female; (19) Kahanoau, female; (20) Saimanu, male; (21) Tepou, female; (22) Maria, female; (23) Silika, male; (24) Te Tou, male; (25) Aumata, female; (26) Horaiwa, female; (27) Urauratu, female; (28) Te Kapua, male; (29) Pou, female; (30) Maria, female; (31) Te Unu, male. Thus we see that thirty-one deaths have occurred since 1885 from leprosy, and twelve are now isolated with it. The statement which was printed in some of our New Zealand papers, a while back, that no isolation had been attempted is absolutely false. The fact of the matter is that the Natives were rather too keen in isolating every case which looked in the slightest way suspicious, and hence I had to liberate four people who were not suffering from leprosy at all. I have instructed all the British Resident Agents that if in future a person is suspected of suffering from leprosy, he or she is to be isolated alone and not allowed to mix with any of the lepers till a medical man comes along, which must be every three or four months. It is absolutely necessary that a medical man should visit the Group regularly, to see not only the lepers but those suffering from other ailments.

The question of looking after the lepers at Penrhyn is one to be inquired into. The poor unfortunates do not get enough to eat. There will be no need to ask for a volunteer as a keeper, as we have already an unrecognised Father Damien in Meka and his young wife, who volunteered to live on the island in order to be near their adopted son. I really do not know what would have happened to these poor unfortunate British subjects if Meka had not volunteered to go amongst them. He does all the fishing and looking-after of the sufferers, and for this he receives no recognition from the civilised world in either funds or praise. Perhaps when the great Master will call His own He will say unto him, "Good and faithful servant, enter into the rest of thy Lord." "For no greater love has man than this: that he lay down his life for his friend."

WATER-SUPPLIES.

All the islands depend mostly on cocoanuts for drinking purposes, and it is just as well that they do so, as the water-supply of most of the islands is very limited. Nearly all the Islanders collect rain-water from their roofs—at least, those who have corrugated-iron roofs—or else use shallow wells, the waters of which are not always palatable or healthy. Only at Rarotonga are there good streams that could be utilised for the purpose.

While at Rarotonga I inspected the source of the proposed Awarua water-supply, and I found the water clean, pure, and cold, springing as it does from the mountains at the back, and running the whole way along a bed of gravel. The stream will be dammed about a mile and a half from the township, and from there it will be piped down in a 4 in. main. I suggested to the engineer that they had better tap the creek further up than they proposed, as by so doing they would avoid the drainings from the taro-swamps, and also obviate hardships on the Natives in regard to having the growing of their main food-supply stopped. Colonel Gudgeon is quite willing to do this.

I further suggested, though it was already thought of, that two concrete swimming-baths be erected at the end of the main, one for the women and one for the men. This can be easily arranged for by utilising the surplus water, and thus we should have a constant flow through the baths.

At Mangaia and all the other islands, with the exception perhaps of Aitutaki, concrete tanks will have to be erected by the Government to store rain-water. At Mangaia I suggested the idea to the resident missionary, and proposed that the water from the churches, which is at present wasted, should be stored, and he said that as far as he was concerned the Government could do so. As there are only a limited number of suitable roofs for catching rain-water in each island, and as all the churches have iron roofs, I think the storing of water from the church-roofs is the solution of the water-supply problem for the Islands.

Shallow wells should be done away with. I am certain that they are catch-alls for all kinds of disease-germs, especially in Native communities, where dogs and pigs are allowed to roam at their own sweet will; and while writing I must urge that the by-laws in the Islands *re* pigs be strictly enforced.

BURIAL-PLACES.

Upon going around the Group one is particularly struck with the number of burial-places there are. The Natives seem to like to have their dead about them, so much so in fact that I have seen Natives living in a house at one end of which would be a grave, enclosed it is true with coral and coral cement, but nevertheless odious and, I have no doubt, pernicious on account of the close proximity to the decaying dead. This must be stopped, and corpses buried in proper places.

HOUSES.

I am of opinion that the Native-built whare, with the addition of a raised floor, cannot be improved upon, for it is cool, airy, and healthy. I noticed that nearly all the recent buildings are well built off the ground. I have been told that the Rev. Mr. Chalmers gave the Natives the idea of building upon stages, which is an exceedingly good one.

On the whole the Cook-Islanders can teach our Maoris how to keep their houses clean; however, I think a regular system of having the kaingas inspected every week or so should be instituted. I noticed that in Aitutaki and Manihiki where this is done the homes are more cleanly and tidy-appearing. Perhaps if the powers of Sanitary Inspectors were given to the Island-police and reports sent in to the Resident Agents throughout it would be most beneficial.