

in numbers, and the number of houses in the villages has lessened. But if the present is contrasted with the last few years, then I am confident that, whilst a few villages still show a decrease and others are practically stationary, the majority show a steady if somewhat slow increase in births over deaths. People are apt to think of the fine old chiefs whose deaths cause large tangis, and to forget the children whose numbers are increasing. Though the adult population may possibly be less, this is more than compensated for by the increased number of children.

The Maori Registrar's figures for the Mangonui Council for the years 1904-7 show fifty-nine births and fifty-two deaths. Though this increase is very small, the Registrar complains that the people do not send in the returns. The returns which suffer are the birth returns, for the Maori is now somewhat frightened of concealing deaths. With births he does not bother so much. Until they are made compulsory the returns will be incomplete and erroneous, the number of births being higher than the returns show. In the village of Waima, where a Native-school teacher takes an active interest in the people, and knows the importance of correct figures, we find that for the years 1904-7 (inclusive) there were 51 births to 17 deaths, making a substantial increase in four years of 34 for one village. Mr. Prinn, Native Medical Dispenser at Taupo, informs me that there has been an undoubted increase of late years in the number of children. At Whakarewarewa, in the Rotorua district, there is a large increase. This I attribute to the fathers obtaining regular work in the State Nursery and other occupations. This in turn leads to regular hours, regular meal-times, and the procuring of good food and warm clothing. Mr. Best refers in his report to the good done by the establishment of a cheese-factory in his district. There can be no doubt that the salvation of the Maori lies in regular work—of his own lands in preference—which will procure for him the necessaries and comforts of life, and carry with it better health, an increased birth-rate, and a rise in the social and mental sphere.

INFANT MORTALITY.

The mortality amongst infants is very high. The old-time Maori has excellent laws for nursing-mothers as regards diet and cleanliness. Also, in a country devoid of the larger mammals, infants were fed entirely at the breast. Since the advent of the cow, tinned milk, and feeding-bottles, much trouble has come upon them. Though the Maori mother does not neglect her children to attend social functions, many have forsaken breast feeding for a different reason. They have in very many cases copied the example of the European, because what the learned pakeha does is right. The introduction of the feeding-bottle into the Maori home has caused as many deaths as the guns of Hongi. Flour and warm water placed in the miracle-working feeding-bottle has been given to delicate infants. The cow is a rare animal in many of the Maori villages, so tinned milk is largely used. As to qualities and mixing, the vast majority are woefully ignorant. Any warm liquid of a whitish appearance is milk of the requisite strength. Miss Rochfort in her Rotorua tour, and my addresses in the various villages, have given the people instruction in this important subject. But the practical work lies in a scheme of district nursing. I would place the care of infants as the most important of the duties. The preparation of humanised milk is beyond the reach of the Maori, for we are too scattered to have corporations to prepare it. In our case we should get the maximum results if the mothers were practically instructed in cleanliness and right proportions of cow's milk and water with the other practical rules of infant-feeding and infant-care. A Health Officer speaks and passes on, but a nurse would visit and see that instructions were being carried out, for the Maori is liable to weary of new things and to lapse.

SANITATION.

Throughout the district the type of dwelling is improving, the majority showing a desire to comply with the Council by-laws. In the Mangonui district I was struck by the number of people who had abandoned the low-lying damp sites and shifted their dwellings on to higher ground. At Rotorua prizes were given by the Health Department, Mr. Leo Buller, and the Mayor of Auckland, for the best-kept houses and grounds in Ohinemutu and Whakarewarewa. There are keen competition amongst the Maoris, and great improvement in the condition of the villages resulted. Lady Plunket, who takes a great interest in all matters which tend to the protection of infant-life, graciously gave certificates to the women who kept their homes in good order. These certificates, neatly framed, are amongst the most valued possessions of the fortunate recipients, and I am sure the happiness that this act of thoughtful kindness has given will amply repay Lady Plunket for the interest she has taken.

The local government of these villages has been handed over from the Arawa Maori Council to the Tourist Department, but the latter have not yet assumed authority. The Village Committee are very active in some parts, and do considerable good. In the North I found a very refreshing feature in the existence of Women's Committees. They visit one another's houses on Sundays, and woe betide the householder whose home is not clean, with the beds well made with clean linen, &c. This is advance in the right direction. The erection of privies is rather tardy. On the whole, one can say there is steady improvement all round.

SANITARY INSPECTORS.

The five Inspectors in the Mangonui, Bay of Islands, Wairoa North, Arawa, and Matatua districts continue to do good work, but there are large districts such as the Waikato and King-country which urgently need Inspectors. The result of the course of instruction given to them at the Auckland Health Office last year by Dr. Pomare, Dr. Purdy and staff, and myself, has benefited them greatly. I append some of their reports.