

where Maori are abandoned. This attitude is especially noticeable in regard to latrines. The Natives are quite apathetic in this respect, and are worthy descendants of their famed ancestor, Awa-tiko-rauraha. They take no notice of advice or suggestions on that head. The state in which one finds the environs of a hamlet when a meeting is toward is often filthy. In many cases this sort of thing must have a truly baleful effect upon the water used for domestic purposes. Natives are not careful in regard to their drinking-water supplies. Those living on delta lands, such as occur in the Ngatiawa territory, and where the water is inferior, have, it appears, a foolish prejudice against water conserved in catchment-tanks.

In regard to the general condition of the people during the past year there are two matters worthy of note—viz., the dairy industry and the effects of "Messiahism." A marked change has taken place in the status of the Natives of the Ruatoki district—i.e., among those who have during the past year turned their attention to milking for the new cheese-factory now operating at Te Rewarewa. These Natives have now the advantage accruing from a steady income, which, albeit small, is yet sufficient to keep them in comparative comfort. They are able to purchase food at the local stores, which enables them to treat lightly any failure of their crops. They also acquire a better standing among storekeepers and Europeans generally. It would be well were the system extended to other parts—e.g., to the alluvial lands of Ngatipukeko and Ngatiawa. In contrast to the above are those Natives who have cast in their lot with the swindling, polygamous shaman, termed "the true Messiah." Many of these have deserted their homes in order to camp at New Jerusalem the Golden, and a number have sold their cottages to Europeans, handing the proceeds over to Rua. Their hamlets, meanwhile, are deserted and decadent. It may be noted that these lunatics present a demeanour less sullen and hostile than of yore, now that they find the pakeha cannot be prophesied or scared from these shores. I have observed several items in praise of the *heka*, but all sane persons know that Messiahs cannot compete with dairy factories as civilising agents. The minor variety of tohungas seem to have been fairly well extinguished by the new light.

No severe epidemics have afflicted this district during the past year.

It is impossible to give the number of births and deaths that have occurred during the year, inasmuch as the Rua-ites decline to register either. Those registered by others amount to—births, 8; deaths, 20. Such incomplete returns must of course continue to be a farce until such time as Natives are compelled by law to register births and deaths. It is an utterly fallacious hope to expect Maoris to administer properly such laws as those pertaining to the above, or registration of dogs, &c.

Nor does the Council take any interest in sanitation generally. Such subjects are never discussed at their meetings.

So far as I can ascertain, there is not much gambling for money, though playing cards for matches is common. Such methods of killing time must obtain so long as the women neglect all domestic work save that of the most primitive nature.

Nor is there a great deal of drinking among these Natives. The local record in that particular seems to be a good one. There are, happily, no hotels at Taneatua, Ruatoki, or Te Waimana, and it is to be hoped that there never will be. The fewer hotels in Native districts, the better.

The Ruatoki Mission, established last year, seems to be doing good work. About ten or twelve Native girls are there being trained in cleanliness and other things which are said to make for righteouness. This practical teaching is excellent; the religious training I have but scant faith in, but I suppose it amuses some folks.

Heoi—ka huri.

ELSDON BEST.

Dargaville, 26th March, 1908.

Dr. Te Rangihiroa, Health Officer to the Maoris, Auckland.

GREETINGS. I send you my report on the Wairoa Council district for the year 1907.

Health.—The health of the district has been good until the spring, when there were many cases of whooping-cough and bronchitis. There were no cases of typhoid. Much good would be done if there were a cottage hospital at Dargaville for Maoris. The Maoris would then be near the doctor for treatment. I would strongly urge the necessity for such a building.

The villages are improving. The houses are entirely built of sawn timber; there are none of the old type remaining. The people are carrying out the Council by-laws, and following the ways of the pakeha.

Milking has been taken up by the Maoris in this district, and I am sure that the industry will be developed to a large extent in the near future.

Farming.—There are several who have taken up farming, who are felling bush and sowing grass-seed. Many of the people here are outsiders who came to the gumfields. Many of them have taken up land from the Crown, from Europeans, or the Maori owners. There are, however, a large number of landless Maoris in the district.

Food-supplies.—The potato and kumara crops have failed, and the people will be poorly off for food. Gum is also getting scarce, and, as this is the chief means of earning a livelihood, the Maoris are now seeking employment in the timber and flax mills and at bushfelling.

Drinking has become considerably less. Many have taken out prohibition orders against themselves, and the Maori Council is very severe upon those who attempt to take liquor to the villages.

Avenues of Work.—There are six timber-mills and five flax-mills in the district.

Improvements, Number of Houses.—Villages, 13; old houses, 88; new houses, 53; condemned houses, 40; cooking-houses, 51; slab houses, 41; latrines, 32; meeting-houses, 14; churches, 7. There is a deal of land being grassed, and the people are taking to breeding cattle.

I remain, &c.,

WAAKA TE HUIA,
Sanitary Inspector.