

COOK ISLANDS.

REPORT OF RESIDENT COMMISSIONER.

No. 1.

SIR,—

Rarotonga, Cook Islands, 3rd May, 1909.

I have the honour to forward enclosed my report on the Cook Islands for year ending 31st March, 1909.

The Islands are in a most satisfactory condition financially and otherwise, and will eventually become very valuable possessions.

I have, &c.,

W. E. GUDGEON,
Resident Commissioner.

The Hon. James Carroll, Minister administering Cook Islands.

Enclosure.

COOK AND NORTHERN ISLANDS.

REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH, 1909.

HEALTH OF THE GROUP.

For the last seven years the health of the Native population of these Islands has been a matter for anxiety, inasmuch as it has been obvious that, however capable the Medical Officer might be, there was always a possibility that the Native population might take exception to his voice or manner, and refuse to go near him. This has already happened in these Islands, and I have found it waste of time to attempt to combat their prejudices.

If the people generally approve of a man, there is hardly anything that they will not do for him, and for this reason the mere fact of their belief has a real medical value so far as they are concerned. A visit from a sympathetic and gentlemanly doctor in whom they believe will often rouse a Maori patient from that condition of mental depression which is the normal condition of the sick Polynesian—the mental condition to which I have referred is well known. It may perhaps be too much to say that the Maori can die at will, but this much may be said: that if he believes that his time has come he will take neither food nor medicine; and in such case only a great tohunga can revive in him the desire of life.

Under these circumstances it will not be difficult to realise the gratification of the Native population when they found that Dr. C. M. Dawson had been appointed Medical Officer for the Group. From the first day of his arrival they have taken to him, and since then the attendance has been from fifty to seventy patients daily.

Nothing has yet been done to extend the benefits of the present medical service to the outlying islands; nor is it possible to make permanent arrangements until Dr. Dawson has visited the several islands and ascertained the requirements thereof. This he will be able to do in May next, when the Mission steamer "John Williams" will visit each island. He will then submit a scheme for the approval of the Government of New Zealand, which must include a permanent assistant, and a headquarters hospital outside the boundaries of the village.

This arrangement will probably double the cost of the present medical service, but it will be money well spent, and we can afford it, provided there is no interference with our fruit trade.

I submit the vital statistics of the three chief islands. From the outlying islands I have not yet received returns, and there is no possibility of obtaining them till the "John Williams" has been there.

These three returns may be regarded as favourable, for they disclose a natural increase for the year of sixty-seven births over deaths, though the latter are excessive.

Vital Statistics.	Aitutaki.			Mangaia.			Rarotonga.					Total.	Population of Three Islands.
	Arutanga.	Waipae.	Tautu.	Oneroa.	Ivirua.	Tamarua.	Avarua.	Matavera.	Ngatangia.	Arorangi.	Titikaveka.		
Births ...	42	5	4	37	15	10	60	9	20	12	12	226	5,240
Deaths ...	24	7	6	15	11	9	45	9	11	5	17	159	
Marriages ...	14	6	4	8	3	12	14	4	6	6	11	88	