

£60 to £70 each. In Rarotonga the settlements of Matavera, Muri, and Titikaveka are without water-supply. £300 has been set down in this year's estimate for tanks in outlying islands, and £500 for improvement of the Avarua supply. This latter work is now almost completed. I have taken on myself to order the necessary pipes for the supply to Matavera settlement, although not provided for in the estimates, as I felt sure you would approve. It had been long promised, and it is merely a detail whether the amount appears in this year or next year's accounts. But the large settlements of Titikaveka and Muri equally need water. They have been in straits for water during the recent dry weather of several months, the drought, however, having now apparently broken. Supply can be got from running streams in each of these cases. It is proposed to start the construction of tanks at Mangaia as soon as practicable, and, if you authorize the expenditure, to follow at the other islands. The only suitable roofs for catchment areas are those of the Mission churches or schools, and though the society has given its cordial assent to that being done yet it naturally wishes to be consulted in each case as to locality of tank, and there is no one at present to consult. I understand a representative is expected before the end of the year. The Health Officers are entirely in accordance with my views on this question of water-supply, as I feel sure you yourself will be.

LAW.

These are in a chaotic state, and badly need consolidating and in some respects amending. The Registrar of the High Court, Mr. Blaine, has an extremely good grip of the complicated Acts, Ordinances, and Regulations in force, and his experience should be availed of to assist in revision.

RESIDENT AGENTS.

These officers are all very dissatisfied with their present pay and future prospects. They urge that they have complicated and responsible duties to perform, and that their conditions of life are expensive and most unattractive, while the pay is small and they have no opportunity of providing for old age such as the New Zealand Civil servant has. Several of them talk of resigning, and suitable men to fill their places will be difficult to find. There is force in their contention, and I commend the question of improving their position to your favourable consideration. What they really want is a little better pay. Residences are needed at Aitutaki and Atiu.

HEALTH.

It may be of some service to make a few remarks, even from a layman's point of view, on this all-important question. And, first, I would like to refer to a statement in Dr. Perceval's report of the 10th October, 1911, appearing in the Resident Commissioner's report for last year—I mean the statement that "leprosy is rife on every island except Rarotonga." This is a grave exaggeration, calculated to cause needless alarm here and in New Zealand. I am not relying solely on my own opinion, though to any one who knows the island the next sentence in the report is largely a refutation of the quoted statement, as I shall try to show. Of the thirty-seven cases which Dr. Perceval states he knows of, his list shows that thirty-two are in the Northern Islands, and five in the Cook Group proper—viz., three at Aitutaki, one at Mangaia, and one at Mitiaro (a suspect). I have heard no more of the suspected case at Mitiaro; the one at Mangaia Dr. Maclurkin has thoroughly examined during his stay there of a month, and he declares it not to be leprosy at all. Dr. Maclurkin is now at Aitutaki for a month and will report on the three persons isolated there on suspicion of leprosy, and I think it highly probable he will say they are not lepers. Even if they are, the statement that leprosy is rife is an exaggeration so far as the Cook Group is concerned. There are lepers in New Zealand, yet no one says leprosy is rife there because there are two or three cases on Quail Island. Dr. Dawson said to me, "The statement may be true as regards the Northern Islands; it is certainly not so in the near islands." Dr. Baldwin has just returned from a six weeks' visit to the Northern Islands. His report will reach you shortly, but he informs me he was unable to find nearly so many lepers even there as Dr. Perceval claims to have done. The latter's report shows that he had only the briefest of stays at each island, and was probably rushed with patients, leaving him little time for observation and careful diagnosis. I have thought it my duty to put this aspect of matters before you, knowing how alarming the mere name of leprosy is to the average man, a feeling I fully share. The reality is bad enough, but it is not so bad as has been stated. Dr. Baldwin will in his report set out proposals for dealing with the northern lepers, and it would be premature for me to attempt to discuss this most difficult problem. I am clear, however, that if it be at all possible a white man should be put in charge of any leper-station—no Native can be trusted in such a position—and if the station is to be at Penrhyn close supervision from here, seven hundred miles away, with only infrequent communication by sailing-vessels, is impracticable.

Syphilis and venereal diseases are the scourge of these Islands, as I believe they are of the whole of the tropical islands of the Pacific. Primarily, of course, filth disease, it is here largely hereditary. But the prevalent habit of promiscuous sexual intercourse among the Natives, the "early sexual excesses," spoken of by Mr. Moss—though, unfortunately, they are not only "early"—must greatly spread the disease and tend to nullify all efforts to ameliorate it. I do not know what can be done to minimize the habit, the outcome of perhaps the strongest of all human passions, but certainly the Islands will never be healthy while it obtains to the present extent. The earnest efforts of the missionaries have through many years been directed against it without, I fear, very substantial results. The ethical and religious side of the question may be safely left to them; but it is the physical effects that I am dwelling