

the other attractions of the island (picture-shows, &c.) may deplete other islands of their young men. It is obvious that the recruiting of labour for Malden and other islands will shortly cease. The last labour-recruiting vessel (in 1912) only succeeded in recruiting seventeen labourers.

HEALTH.

The health of the Natives in these Islands is in a most deplorable and unsatisfactory condition, as is shown by each Medical Officer's report year by year, but with the exception of Rarotonga, Aitutaki, and Mangaia we have done little or nothing to improve matters.

Dr. Percival, reporting in October, 1911, said, "The health of the people of Mauke, Atiu, Aitutaki, and Mangaia is in such a bad condition that it would take a medical man six months on each island to rectify before they could be visited at stated intervals."

The health of the Natives, if they are to be preserved, should be one of our first duties. Then comes the question, How is it to be done? Financially the Administration is not strong enough to cope with it alone. The Northern Islands have had only two brief visits (too brief for any material benefit), and Pukapuka was visited only in 1911 (by Dr. Percival), though there are 490 inhabitants there.

These Islands became part of New Zealand by virtue of an Order in Council of the 15th May, 1901. Thus, being part of New Zealand, would it not be more practicable and wiser for the Health Department of New Zealand to take over the control of the health of the Islands, this Administration paying out of its revenue a proportion of the cost, to be assessed each year? At present there are 3,168 Natives we are doing little or nothing for.

With regard to the lepers, Dr. Percival in his report of October, 1911, said, "I would strongly advise that, in the interests of the patients, in the interests of the inhabitants, and having regard to the fruit trade, all these cases should be collected by a Government vessel and isolated at Penrhyn." Dr. Baldwin again brought this urgent matter before the Minister and Commissioner in his report in April, 1912, and again in June, 1913. With the frequency of vessels trading to and from New Zealand it is necessary some steps should be taken with as little delay as possible, for Dr. Baldwin points out one case of leprosy had lain dormant at Aitutaki for two years. The lepers now segregated at Aitutaki and Penrhyn have had the conditions under which they live very much improved. They are now visited periodically by the Resident Agents, who fulfil the duty, hitherto imposed on the relatives, and much neglected by them, of seeing to the food-supplies, so that they may never suffer from want. Substantial shelters have been erected for them, and tanks provided for the collection of rain-water for their use.

The Chief Medical Officer's report shows that the number of out-patients attended at Rarotonga during the year was 8,964, from which it is evident that a very large number of persons must have been treated many times over, the population of Rarotonga being only 2,759.

ISLAND LAWS.

The so-called laws of the Islands are in a most unsatisfactory state. From the 31st December, 1904, there was no validly constituted body to make laws, therefore all Ordinances passed by the so-called Federal Council and assented to by the Governor are null and void, and legislation by the New Zealand Parliament is urgently needed to extricate the present Island laws from their chaotic state. The proceedings in the Land Titles Court from the 7th February, 1906, to the 19th August, 1913 (both dates inclusive), require to be validated, as there was no properly constituted Court during that period, though a great many claims were adjudicated upon.

In my opinion the easiest and best way out of the difficulty would be to give each island power to make its own domestic laws, something similar to the New Zealand Maori Councils Act with such alterations as are deemed necessary. Mr. Ralfe and I have gone into this matter pretty thoroughly, and have submitted our compilation of the laws at present necessary for the better government of these Islands to the Solicitor-General, who I sincerely hope will be able to present to the New Zealand Parliament this coming session a Bill that will meet our requirements, and get the Administration out of the present chaotic mess.

APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS.

In conclusion, I would most respectfully suggest that in future all officers for these Islands be appointed from the Public Service of New Zealand. You would then have well-trained officers whose qualifications were known. They should be allowed a year and a half for each year's service to count toward their retiring-period. They should be stationed in the Islands not longer than from three to five years (except, perhaps, the officer in charge of the experimental nursery), so as not to get "islandized." They should be allowed Island pay, and not lose their grade or chance of promotion in their respective Departments in New Zealand proper. The isolation and privation here are very great, therefore inducement must be offered to get good men to come, and the best the Public Service can spare are required for the work. By adopting this system you will do away with the burning question of pensions that is repeatedly cropping up. The Resident Commissioner will always require to be an experienced judicial officer with administrative ability while he continues to act in the dual capacity of Chief Justice of the High Court and Resident Commissioner, and as the Islands advance in development so will the need be the greater, for he deals with all cases taken by a Supreme Court Judge, from murder down.

Attached are the reports of the Treasurer, the Registrar of Courts, the Chief Medical Officer, Assistant Medical Officer, the Engineer, the Fruit Inspector, and the Auditor.

I have, &c.

H. W. NORTHCROFT,
Resident Commissioner.

The Hon. the Minister in Charge, Cook Islands Administration, Wellington.