

REPORT OF CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER.

SIR,—

8th May, 1914.

I have the honour to present my report on the year's work of the Medical Division.

The year has been free from any disease of any epidemic type, and the health of this island has, on the whole, been fairly good.

The number of patients admitted to hospital was 109, making, with twelve cases left from the previous year, a total of 121, as against a total of eighty-four in the previous year. The daily average was 12·15, so that every bed was practically occupied the whole year.

The number of out-patients was 8,967, against 3,710, a large number of the increase being vaccinations.

All the near islands have been visited during the year, but, except at Aitutaki, no lengthy stay was made. At the time of these visits the general health of the islands was good. As I have not had any report from the Resident Agents I am unable to say anything as to the health generally at other times. It is desirable that reports should be sent as opportunity occurs.

I beg to draw attention again to the need for providing proper accommodation for the lepers; extra accommodation at the hospital; and powers for making and enforcing regulations on health matters, to all of which I have referred in previous reports.

I have, &c.,

G. PEARCE BALDWIN,

Chief Medical Officer.

The Resident Commissioner.

REPORT OF ASSISTANT MEDICAL OFFICER.

SIR,—

7th March, 1914.

I have the honour to submit my report on my visits by the "Huanui" to the Islands of Aitutaki, Manuae, Atiu, Mauke, and Mitiaro.

The "Huanui" left Rarotonga on the 12th February, and returned on the 6th March, having been away three weeks. I was able to spend five days in Aitutaki, six in Mauke, and one each in Mitiaro and Atiu. Landing could not be effected on Manuae owing to stress of weather, but I received a report from the Manager there, Mr. Hobbs, as to the health of the labourers.

At Atiu, Mauke, and Aitutaki I left a good supply of drugs behind, as I found the dispensary stocks there very meagrely furnished.

Aitutaki.

During my stay here I visited all the settlements, and also the Island of Motu-rakau, on which the lepers are segregated.

All the houses in the settlement of Vaipae and Tautu have been more or less destroyed by the violence of the recent hurricane, and many have been completely demolished. Some stone-walled houses have the walls still standing, but in all cases the roofs and verandas have been carried away. In Amuri, Arutanga, Nikaupara, and Reureu the damage, although bad enough, has not been so extreme—about fifteen houses or buildings in these settlements have been practically uninjured. Since the hurricane the weather has been dry and warm, and the Natives have suffered little inconvenience from the loss of their dwellings. They have erected "nikau" shelters and sheds, constructed from the roof-iron and timbers of their old houses.

There is no distress in the island. Native foods—kumera, arrowroot, yam, &c.—are abundant, and the raui having been lifted, copra is being made rapidly, and money is not lacking to purchase food from the stores, which are well supplied with flour, biscuits, and meats.

The health of the people is surprisingly good—better, in fact, than it has been at any of my previous visits to the island. I am of opinion that the hurricane has done good by blowing down the old insanitary houses and compelling the people to sleep in sheds or "nikau" houses, from which the fresh air cannot be excluded. The work also which has been forced upon them as a consequence of the hurricane, by dispelling their customary apathy and indolence, appears to have had a stimulating effect upon the general health.

An iron-roofed building, consisting of one room with veranda, has now been erected on the Island of Motu-rakau. A 400-gallon tank has also been installed, so that now the lepers are in much better circumstances.

Mauke.

On this island the ravages of the hurricane were evident in the shape of a collapsed house here and there, and indications of a tremendous sea having come inland as far as the shore settlement of Kimiangatau. The coconut and orange trees have suffered no apparent serious damage, the chief mischief having been caused by the sea, which washed down many of the houses in Kimiangatau.

I visited many houses in both settlements, and talked with representative men, who confirmed the Resident Agent's statement that there had been very little acute illness on the island recently. At the date of my visit there were no serious cases of acute illness, and on the whole the health of the island may be said to be good. There are, of course, the usual chronic conditions prevalent in all the islands, resulting from immorality, intermarriage, dietetic indiscretions and monotony, and careless personal hygiene, accentuated by residence in insanitary dwellings, often of a type unsuited to the climate. These conditions, which all over the Pacific are gradually leading to the extinction of the Polynesian, cannot be satisfactorily dealt with by merely treating individual cases of disease. When a really strong and energetic Administration takes in hand the necessary social and hygienic reforms something may be done to arrest the decay which, if no steps are taken, must surely lead to the extinction of the Maori population in these Islands.