

No. 13.

Dr. O'CARROLL, New Plymouth, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.
(No. 85/1515.)

SIR,—

New Plymouth, 26th April, 1885.

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of Circular No. 6, and in compliance with its request, beg to report that the sanitary condition of the Natives in my district has vastly improved, owing, no doubt, to the scare of our late erysipelas cases at Parihaka, and to your prompt circular, calling attention to the danger menacing the entire Native race in Parihaka pah, and indeed the whole district. I think that it would take but little persuasion on our part to break up the old pah, and induce Te Whiti and Tohu to found a new one, further back in the bush on higher grounds, or on a fishing reserve nearer the sea. Perhaps if I give my reason for stating this, you will agree with me. Te Whiti has this day sent me Lyod, or Te Rangi, one of our chief Native prisoners of a few years ago (who up to this has held aloof from us), with this message:—"Go to the Doctor O'Carroll, and tell him to give you proper treatment. I recognise the fact that he prevented the spread of our late disease, and did more to prevent death than our own doctors. Do as he tells you, for he means well. I will now endeavour to follow his instructions." I judge from this message that we have now a chance of instilling our sanitary laws into the Maoris, and bringing them to see their good working on our own towns. Death has removed most of leading chiefs north of the town of New Plymouth, where once I could go to such men as Mahon, Ihaia, Tamiti, or Tamihana—none are left to take their places; their mana has passed away, and for bad or good the Native surgeon has to rely now upon the individual afflicted with disease alone, and a little upon his relations, when it is remembered that the affection of relatives for the sick amongst the Natives is of a most slender type. Often have we to beg them to send a few miles for medicine, or to remove them to another whare, with the result that neither requests have been complied with. This fact, combined with these others—that the Natives distrust us, imagine we bring disease amongst them to exterminate the race, and their own doctors are jealous of our interference.

The gradual individualization of the land tends to split up the inhabitants of large pahas into small family kiangas, who settle upon and till their favourite spot of ground.

The Maoris living near our large centres of European population are gradually imitating their ways, both bad and good; their food consisting of beef, potatoes, bread, and, I am sorry to say, waipiro. They are more prone to our European diseases than their more remote brethren, who, living upon a fish diet combined with potatoes, kumere tara, and such vegetables, are more afflicted with skin and consumptive diseases. Psoriasis is the most prevalent disease amongst the true fish-eating Maoris. More especially I have noticed, that so-called preserved shark renders the Natives more susceptible than others to this disease. It is at once followed (when freely partaken of by the Maoris) by a severe attack of urticaria, or nettle-rash, which at various times gives place to psoriasis, or lepra. I should be glad to hear if other Native Surgeons have noticed this fact. The Native water supply in my district is both abundant and pure. The Natives are now beginning to build much larger houses—the old wharepuni and mimies are disappearing, much to my satisfaction.

Pigs and fowls are kept in separate domiciles from the human beings, but I am sorry to say that the canines are not; and it is a matter of regret to see so many mangy and skin-diseased dogs sleeping in the Maori whares, no doubt occasioning and transmitting their numerous skin diseases to the human race. The clothing of the entire Maori race in my district has vastly improved, almost every Native having one or more suits of European clothes, but the inner clothing is not so frequently washed as we would wish, I am prepared to state.

The subject of the liquor traffic is one which it would be well I should now treat once and for ever (if I might be permitted). Either the Maori should be permitted to be served at the public-houses the same as Europeans, or strictly forbidden, and the law enforced. A few years ago, I remember the law was enforced here, I think under the Hon. Mr. Wm. Fox's Government, and I must say, I seldom visited a pah where I did not see bottles of grog in nearly every whare, and the Natives took delight in asking us to have a glass. I once tried this grog—never will I do so with my lips again; it must have come from a bush still.

It will be remembered, that during the last four months of last year a severe contagious disease, viz., erysipelas, prevailed among the Parihaka Natives, caused, no doubt, by the defective sanitary condition of their pah. On receiving the Hon. Mr. Ballance's instructions I proceeded there. As I reported before, I need but recapitulate the facts that several deaths had taken place, that there were at least forty-five well-marked cases; that twenty-one more cases had the disease slightly, or were sickening previous to the formation of matter; that the whares where the dead had been taken yet retained the putrid matter and smell of the disease. The able-bodied men suffered most. Owing to the kind co-operation of Major Goring, commanding A.C. Force at Parihaka, and Lieutenant-Colonel Roberts, N.Z.C., commanding A.C. Force, Taranaki, I was enabled to immediately place Sergeant Faike, the A.C. Hospital Surgeon, in charge; but no sooner had I left than half the worse cases returned to their own doctors, mistrusting us. However, on my second visit I reasoned with them, and most of them returned to us, and on my third visit all were well.

Generous diet, combined with the proper treatment, I must say, carried our European mode of combating with the disease in triumph against the prejudice and well known antipathy of the Maoris of Parihaka. All acknowledged we were most successful, and only last month I had the pleasure of hearing from most of the natives, who composed Titokowaru's peace party from Parihaka, visiting Pakearuhe, that they felt they owed Ballance a return for his good work in sending me and my medicine to their relief. While on this subject, let me state my opinion, based on my twenty-two years' service in the Native Medical Department, that is:—That these large raids of Natives, however well meant or good intentioned, serves only, like a flock of locusts, to deprive our little, struggling Native pahas of all their winter provisions—drives the Native lease land-holders to borrow and anticipate their rents in order to welcome