

*Returns of Births, Deaths, and Marriages.*

We find that the officers appointed to send in returns of births, deaths, and marriages have not sent them as regularly as necessary for statistical purposes. We consider, therefore, that the money paid to them has been wasted, and, until better arrangements can be made, that the payments on this account should cease.

*Security of Land Tenure.*

We have received a letter from the British Resident on this important subject. Experience shows that some just means must be taken to guard against the complete alienation of land by the present owners or their children, and so leaving many families without the means of maintaining life. The subject is one with which the Federal Parliament cannot deal, but we bring it before you in order that members, when they return to their several islands, may be able to explain to their people the thoughts and the recommendations of the British Resident on this important matter.

*New Laws.*

The experience of the year has shown that the local laws of the different islands do not provide sufficiently for cases of murderous assault and murder. We shall propose to you a law to bring all such cases before the Federal Court, and to provide the usual death penalty, or other punishment that may be adequate to the offence, which is happily new, and will, we trust, be rare, if it occur at all, in future. The possibility must, however, be provided for. We shall also propose to you a law to authorise the printing of existing federal laws, and the making of such verbal alterations as may be necessary to make their meaning in Maori and in English more clear. We propose that, when printed, the book of such laws shall be certified by the Chief of the Federal Government and the Chairman of the Parliament. The revise will also, of course, be subject to the approval of the British Resident, so that we think that the powers suggested may be safely granted. The means of printing now at our disposal offer a great advantage, but they are small, and much time will be lost if some such course as we suggest be not adopted. A law will also be necessary to guard against the landing of sick or insane persons from ships visiting the different islands without proper security that they do not become a burden on our revenue and people.

We do not propose to lay any other laws before you.

*The Estimates*

of expenditure for the year 1896-97 will be laid before you. We shall ask you in them to make some provision towards the erection of a wharf and shed for the Union Steam Shipping Company. The proposal of the company on this subject will be laid before you. The value of a second steam-service is so great to all the islands that the Federal Parliament may be reasonably asked to contribute their share.

We commend you to God's grace, and pray that your deliberations may be for the good of the people of the Cook Islands.

For the Government,  
MAKEA TAKAU,  
Chief of the Government.

*Sub-enclosure.*

To the ARIKIS of RAROTONGA and of all the COOK ISLANDS.

SALUTATIONS! To you and all the owners of the land. I wish again to speak on this occasion, when you are once more gathered together in Parliament.

I have told you, year by year, one great danger before you and before your people. The Cook Islands are no longer alone; they are now linked on to the rest of the world, and people will come from other places seeking to buy your land. Sooner or later you or your children will be consumed by a thirst for money with which to buy many things. Then you will sell the land and spend the money, and you and your children and your people's children be reduced to practical slavery, because you will all be obliged to work for other people, and take such pay as they may be willing to give. You will have to do that or starve.

Do not think I am moved by vain fears. This has happened in all countries where the chiefs who owned the land have not cared for the people in time. You have read in *Te Torea* the words of Tusitala (Stevenson) to the people of Samoa, and the words from Hawaii, and it has been so all over the world. Your land must be used for the sustenance of men. For that God gave you the land, and if you disobey his word the land will sooner or later leave you for ever to go into other hands.

What I ask you to do is very simple. In each of the islands appoint wise men able to do the work, and let them allot to every family land enough to grow their own food, and a little coffee or other produce to sell. Let the boundaries of the land be marked by planting a row of lime-trees or other permanent trees, which will give fruit for sale or use. Let the name of the family and of the land be recorded in the books of the Council of that island.

Also let each family pay to the owner of the land either food and services, as now, in return for its use, or, better still, a fixed sum of money every year.

Then pass in each island a law that this land shall be called "family land"; that it shall be possessed by the family so long as the rent is paid; and that it shall not be sold, leased, mortgaged, or taken from the family on any pretext, except by a law of the Council of the island in which it is situated, such law to be approved by the British Resident for the time being, like any other law, and to be the only title that can be given to that land.

If you do this you and your people will never be reduced to poverty.