

I.—INTRODUCTORY

The Cook Islands were proclaimed a British Protectorate in 1888. On the 11th June, 1901, under the provisions of the Colonial Boundaries Act, 1895, the Group was annexed to the British Empire and proclaimed part of New Zealand.

Niue Island, which is situated at S. 19 degrees, W. 169 degrees 48 minutes, has an area of 100 square miles. This island has been administered separately from the remainder of the Cook Group since 1903, and a report on the year's activities is included in the latter portion of this report.

Excluding Niue, there are fifteen islands in the Cook Group; these have a total land area of a little under 100 square miles and are scattered over approximately 850,000 square miles of ocean. The Group is bounded on the west and east by the 167th and 156th meridians of west longitude respectively, and on the north and south by the 8th and 23rd parallels of south latitude. Penrhyn Island, the most northerly of the Group, lies 9 degrees south of the Equator, while Mangaia, the most southerly island, is just north of the Tropic of Capricorn.

The Cook Islands, other than Niue, are divided naturally into the Southern, or Lower, Group and the Northern Group. In the Lower Group, Rarotonga, Aitutaki, Atiu, Mitiaro, Mauke, and Mangaia are elevated, fertile islands, and these produce oranges and other citrus fruit. Copra is the main product of Manuae and Takutea in the Lower Group and of the islands of the Northern Group—Penrhyn, Manihiki, Rakahanga, Pukapuka, Nassau, Suvarrow, and Palmerston—which are all low-lying atolls.

The whole of the Group lies within the hurricane zone, and a number of destructive storms have been experienced; the most serious of these in recent years occurred in February, 1935, in March, 1943, and in January, 1946. The hurricane season extends from December to March, both months inclusive, and it is at this time of the year that there is always the possibility of severe storms. No serious storms were experienced during the hurricane season just past. The hurricane season is also the rainy season, and during these months the climate is hot and humid. For the remainder of the year the climate in the Lower Group islands is mild and equable. The average temperature in Rarotonga during the last thirty-six years was 74.6 degrees Fahrenheit, and the average annual rainfall during the same period was 83.6 in.

Rarotonga, the seat of the Cook Islands Administration, is 1,633 nautical miles from Auckland. The island is well watered by creeks and streams, and all villages are supplied with water by means of a reticulation system. All the outer islands, however, suffer from a lack of streams and wells, and water is provided at all of them from public tanks. The number of tanks is being steadily increased.

On 31st March, 1947, the Native population totalled 14,570, and, with 4,328 in Niue, the Native population of the Cook Islands was 18,898. The European population of the Cook Islands was 251, and of Niue 25, giving a grand total of 19,174.

II. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

(The following report does not include Niue; see page 17)

Laws governing the whole of the Cook Islands are made by Act of the Parliament of New Zealand, or by Orders in Council and regulations issued thereunder. Ordinances, restricted in their application to the islands where they are made, are passed by local Island Councils, of which there are ten. These local Ordinances require the assent of the Resident Commissioner, or they may be reserved for the signification of the Governor-General's pleasure.

The Resident Commissioner in Rarotonga and the Resident Agents in the outlying islands are the Presidents of the respective Island Councils; the Resident Commissioner is an *ex officio* member of all Island Councils, and the Resident Agent of each island is