

done by a European officer who will reside among the people and endeavour to obtain their confidence. Probably the most suitable officer I have for this purpose is Mr. J. T. Large, who is anxious to undertake the work. I may say that I should have recommended Mr. Large for this position six months or more ago had I then been certain that the revenue would bear the extra charges that must fall upon it this year.

PUKAPUKA (DANGER ISLAND).

On this island we have no Resident Agent, but for some time past the Native pastor, Tou, has acted as our agent whenever occasion arose, and whatever there may have been to do he has done well. On my visit to this island in May, 1908, I was accompanied by Dr. Gatley, who found two lepers in this primitive community (Ieremaia and Paki), and recommended that they should be isolated by enclosure within a palisade, as was the old custom in New Zealand. In September last I received a letter from Tou to the effect that these two men had been enclosed in a palisaded yard 20 yards by 14 yards, and were well housed, and that a pool of stagnant water had been filled in with earth, in accordance with Dr. Gatley's wishes.

During the May visit I had strongly urged the people to plant one of their islands on the reef, which had long been neglected; and I now learn by the same September letter that under the influence of Pastor Tou the people had commenced the planting on the 6th July last, and had resolved to give one month in each year to the planting and clearing of this island.

There is something obscure in the occurrence of these cases of leprosy in this remote and little-visited island, for the people assert that they have had no previous cases of this disease, and that the two men have never been away from the island.

AITUTAKI.

We have here succeeded in obtaining an Island Council that has both the will and the ability to govern the people thoroughly and justly, and run it on the lines of the old legal maxim, "*Salus reipublicæ suprema est lex.*" This maxim is in strict accord with the feelings of the people, who prefer the patriarchal form of government that compels them to perform those things that they know should be done, but which they are inclined to put off from day to day indefinitely.

In this island there is no written law by which a man can be compelled to plant food for his family. It is an island in which the breadfruit flourishes, and heads of families have for years trusted to this natural product and to the fish-supply. The Council have, however, resolved that there shall be no element of chance in the food-supply of their island. They have decided that men shall plant, and that they shall be punished if they do not. To this end the Council inspects all of the land of the island once or twice in each year, and the man who has not planted has to appear before the Council and give an account of his stewardship. In like manner the Council exercises a rigid supervision over the houses, and anything dangerous to the health of the people is at once removed.

For these very satisfactory conditions we have primarily to thank the Resident Agent, Mr. Cameron, and his Council, but the people of Aitutaki, who are probably the most intelligent Natives in the Group, deserve equal commendation.

MANIHIKI AND RAKAHANGA.

On these two islands there have at all times been two factions, each one bitterly hating and striving for power over the other. This state of affairs has probably arisen from the fact that the social condition of these islands has always been faulty. For instance, there have never been hereditary chiefs with the natural inherited authority usual among Polynesians, by which alone it was possible to obtain peace and order.

The so-called Arikis are merely the descendants of the *fainga aitu*, or heathen priests, whose duty it was to keep hurricanes from the island. Since the introduction of Christianity these men have had but little power, and the northern Group has been governed by a gang of self-elected men who have constituted themselves the *hau* (governing body) of the islands. The tyranny of these men has only been held in check by a strong-minded pastor. It was a man of this class who defeated the attempt made many years ago to bring about the annexation of Manihiki and Rakahanga by the French. This he did by hoisting the English flag before the French could land, and refused to allow it to be hauled down.

I do not wish it to be inferred that those who brought the French had any desire to see them masters of the island. All that they desired was to deprive the Mission or British party of all power, and to effect this they were prepared to sacrifice their own independence. This bad feeling was in existence when I visited these islands in company with Lord Ranfurly, and the French party then had their turn, for it was Aporo and Tupou-a-rotu who prevented the annexation at that time. When, however, the islands had been annexed the British party asserted themselves, and in Manihiki fixed themselves firmly in power, and even in Rakahanga managed to secure a majority of the Council members. The result of the institution of popular government in the Group was that the turbulent element were deprived of all power, and this condition prevailed up to the month of March, 1908, when the fall in the price of copra irritated the whole population, whose belief was that they had a right to fix the price of island produce. In Manihiki this belief did little harm; but in Rakahanga most of the people supported the malcontents, and gave their duly elected Council no support when the enemy, under the leadership of Pukerua, ejected the Council, pulled down the British flag, and generally took the direction of affairs into their own hands. I cannot say that all of these men deserved severe punishment, for some of them were merely ignorant and violent, and required the lesson they have now received in order to prevent a recurrence of these disorders. I do not anticipate any further trouble.