

COOK ISLANDS.

REPORT OF RESIDENT COMMISSIONER.

SIR,—

Cook Islands Administration, Rarotonga, 15th April, 1915.

I have the honour to report as follows for the year ended the 31st March, 1915:—

In May and June last these Islands were visited by Their Excellencies the Earl and Countess of Liverpool and the Hon. Dr. and Mrs. Pomare. The Hon. the Minister arrived first, on 22nd May, in the "Tutanekai," followed on the 25th by H.M.S. "Philomel," and on the 27th by Their Excellencies in the Union Company's steamer "Willochra," from which they transhipped at once to the "Tutanekai." On the 28th Their Excellencies landed at 10 a.m., and were formally welcomed by the Arikis, Mataiapos, Rangatiras, and Natives of Rarotonga, together with the Europeans resident in the Islands, and had all those present who wished to be presented to them. They were then escorted to the palace of Makea Ariki, and were again welcomed in true Native fashion with speeches, dancing, and feasting. On the 29th, on landing, they were escorted to Karika Ariki's house, and were entertained in a similar fashion. On the 30th His Excellency, with the Hon. the Minister, met the Arikis, Mataiapos, Island Council, and Europeans in the Courthouse, hearing their requests and discussing with them questions of importance to the Islands, chiefly such matters as the exportation of fruit and the necessary improvement in steam transport, the present chaotic state of the laws and suggested remedies, education, the medical service, and the holding of Land Titles Courts. Later Their Excellencies visited the Hospital, and in the afternoon received all the Europeans who wished to be presented to them at the Residency. On the evening of the 31st they left in the "Tutanekai" for Mangaia, Mauke, Atiu, Mitiaro, and Aitutaki. At each island they were heartily welcomed by the Arikis and people. His Excellency met the leading people, and discussed with them many economic questions of interest to them and of importance to the Islands; whilst the Minister met the Island Councils and discussed their requirements, especially the proposed laws, the Land Titles Courts, and the schools.

The vice-regal party returned to Rarotonga on the 5th June. On the 6th they were entertained at a "fish-drive" at Nikao by Mr. W. Browne. On the 8th Their Excellencies were escorted to Ngatangia, where they were welcomed in true Native fashion by Pa Ariki, Kainuku Ariki, and the Mataiapos, Rangatiras, and people of the Takitumu Tribe. Next day—the 9th—they were escorted to Arorangi, where a similar entertainment was held, the hosts being Tinomana Ariki, and the Mataiapos, Rangatiras, and people of the Puaikura Tribe. On the 10th they attended a large reception and ball given in their honour by Mr. and Mrs. Tinirau (son and daughter-in-law of Rangi Makea Ariki), and on the 11th left again for New Zealand by the Union Company's steamship "Māna."

The visit to these Islands has been undoubtedly beneficial in every sense of the word. Their Excellencies were so gracious and cordial to every one—Europeans and Natives alike—that their visit will long be remembered in these Islands, and there was universal regret at their departure.

FINANCE.

The revenue for the year amounted to £10,117 15s. 3d., which, with the balance brought forward from last year (£3,591 14s. 8d.), makes a total of £13,709 9s. 11d. The expenditure totalled £10,617 2s. 6d., leaving a balance in hand of £3,092 7s. 5d. at the close of the financial year.

PUBLIC WORKS.

During this last financial year many permanent public works have been carried out through the Islands.

At Rarotonga police quarters and cells have been erected, also a house at Ngatangia for a school-teacher's residence, and a house at Arorangi purchased and put in good repair for the teacher there. A new operating-theatre has been added on to the Hospital, and a mortuary built, also two purau huts for patients suffering from tuberculous disease. An addition was made to the fumigator building to provide an office for the Fruit Inspectors. Anchors have been put down on the reef, and the harbour made as safe as possible for schooners.

At Aitutaki the Courthouse has been reroofed and generally renovated, and the veranda rebuilt; the roof of the schoolhouse at Araura has been repaired, the building generally renovated, all the windows reglazed, and the veranda rebuilt. These buildings had been damaged by the hurricane.

At Atiu a substantial house has been built for the Resident Agent.

At Manihiki the Resident Agent's house (damaged by the hurricane) has been renovated, and the Courthouse roofed, the walls raised and fourteen doors put in, and arrangements made to conduct water from the roof to a concrete tank hitherto unused.

At Penrhyn a substantial house has been built for the Resident Agent, and also a concrete tank.

At Pukapuka quarters have been erected for a Resident Agent, also two concrete tanks and a catch-water shed.

Many important works that were projected last year had to be held over, owing to the increased price of materials—caused by the war—viz.: The water-supply for Muri (Rarotonga), the bores for water at Aitutaki, and at Mangaia the tram-line from the shed to the landing; besides other works of less importance. On inviting tenders for the pipes and other material it was found that the increase in price was so great that our estimate was totally inadequate, and it was decided to postpone these works till a more favourable occasion.