

"The fourth phase, of which the tendencies are revealing, perhaps, an increased impetus in the last few years, is one of renewed productive effort. Heralded by a conciliatory policy, it has been stimulated by the opening-up of large areas of land to European settlement. The Native has shown a revived interest in all forms of commercial enterprise, and has displayed a conscious desire for the adoption of European economic methods. The former Maori material culture has been largely replaced by that of the white man, and the old economic structure has given way in corresponding fashion. Assisted by the deliberate policy of individualizing the shares in tribal land, the former communal system has been gradually abandoned, as no longer suited to the new social environment."

It is in regard to Dr. Firth's statement of the characteristics of the fourth phase that some qualifications may be made—could, indeed, have been made by himself if his study had penetrated the psychological strata of Maori life and thought. The material culture of a race may almost completely change its appearance; the social conditions are bound to be profoundly influenced by the juxtaposition of those of Western culture; while the code of morality must be adjusted to a civilization based on Christian ethics. But beneath the surface Native characteristics may persist and racial influences continue their sway over the mind and spirit of the people to a greater extent than European investigators can appreciate. The materials and form of habitations have so completely changed, that, except in parts of Waikato and of the Urewera country, the reed-hatched *whare* has disappeared; education has inculcated a desire for separate, individual homes, in which the educated young mother seeks to reproduce something of the social life of the pakeha—the flower-garden, the cottage piano, the gramophone, or radio set, and the tennis-court. The young husband may have his dairy-farm or be employed in the industry of the neighbourhood, and so secure the food, the clothing, the services and amenities of the civilization he is born in. All amusements in which he and his wife may indulge are those of the pakeha—football, tennis, dancing, cinemas, horse-racing, and the like. His religious life is ordered by the observances of one or other of the European Churches or of a sect of his own making, centred round some personality, who makes a psychological appeal based more or less on the Bible.

Yet, withal, close observation reveals the hold of the tribal organization and of Native social custom over the lives of the people. The stratifications of the tribal system have been little disturbed by the incursion of Western ideas, and although social advancement may have been attained by the acquisition of wealth, as the modern world regards it, or by education or intermarriage, the *rangatira* families continue to receive the deference due to their rank and ancient prestige and to exercise in ceremonial the privileges of their position. The yea or nay of influential men or women of erstwhile ruling families, even in the things that the new laws may have appropriated to individuals, is a vital factor in the success or failure of an undertaking. The wise administrator is he who recognizes the existence and vitality of this element in Maori society and adjusts his policy accordingly. If to this element are harnessed the advantages of education and experience of the economy of modern society and personal qualities, which are apt to recur in individuals of the in-bred chieftain lines, the result may be quite remarkable. There is abundant evidence that representatives of these lines are revealing under different and more difficult conditions than prevailed in the hey-day of their family history those qualities of energetic leadership, of wise diplomacy and judgment, which made the chieftains and priests of old such powerful and formidable men. And they are demanding that the resources of the tribe, including education and training acquired from the pakeha, shall be organized towards its welfare and development. They are in their persons and by virtue of the traditions surrounding their families calling anew to long-dormant tribal sentiment and allegiance.

It is true that "the former Maori material culture has been largely replaced by that of the white man," but the change is in form, in externals. Thus in agriculture there has been an adjustment, the steel axe replacing the stone axe and fire for clearing scrub and forest; the spade and plough, discs, drills, and other implements displacing the *ko* and *kaheru*; while domesticated animals or tractors draw the modern contrivances for the various operations in husbandry. The aim is, as of old, the cultivation of the land for the production of food.

Dr. Firth himself in the earlier chapters of the work from which the summary has been quoted describes in great detail the economic system of the old-time Maori and the social organization to which that system was related. He emphasizes the mechanical ability of the race, its arts and crafts, the status of the carvers, of the house-builders, of the canoe-builders and navigators in the economy of the tribes, and the political and administrative capacity displayed by chiefs and leaders.

MECHANICAL ABILITY.

In a modest way it may be claimed that the Maori of old showed a mechanical genius in his constructive work, his superior houses, his war-canoes, and fortifications. The concomitants were a talent for organization and an artistic ability that finished his handiwork to satisfy his æsthetic sense. The mechanical ability of the Maori has been applied to the constructive work necessitated by the immigrant civilization, which has discovered in him a high average efficiency. From the felling of trees to the building of houses, from the clearing of fern and scrub to the laying-down of permanent pastures, in the operations of road and railway making, and in the handling of implements and machines, the Maori workman has reached a standard of competence sufficient to justify a place for him on the land. He is cheerful and contented, a philosopher at work. His racial endowment in the possession of a keen eye, a deft touch, and a ready co-ordination of mind and muscle is one that statesmen must build on. It has developed greatly under the quickening influences of modern industry. It is a foundation on which changes in material culture may operate without loss in essentials, provided that the mental outlook of the race is not bewildered and obscured by the rapidity of the variations. It may be definitely stated that the Maori of this generation views with philosophic calm the ever-varying devices of western civilization for achieving the age-old purposes of the human race. Novelty is no longer miracles, and the greatest miracle of all, the Englishman himself, has ceased to be a novelty.