

1878.

NEW ZEALAND.

# SANITARY REPORT ON NATIVES OF TAUPO DISTRICT.

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.*

Dr. WALKER to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Taupo District, 4th September, 1878.

In the absence of the Officer Commanding this district, I have the honor to enclose for your information a sanitary report of the Natives of this district.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. John Sheehan,  
Native Minister, Wellington.

SAMUEL WALKER,  
Surgeon A. C., Medical Attendant to Natives.

SIR,—

Taupo, 4th September, 1878.

For the information of Government, I have the honor to make the following sanitary report on the condition of the Natives of this district.

I will premise by saying that a great number of Natives have sought and received medical treatment, from a dose of salts up to months of consecutive medication, besides many injuries, such as fractures, dislocations, &c. They manage to come a long distance when medical aid is required; but I have visited many at their settlements, and a practice among them of many years confirms my early impression that not many die from disease *per se*, but that the majority of deaths occur through insufficient and improper alimentation—in other words, the want of proper food, a process of slow starvation, is the chief cause in this district, at any rate, of this mortality.

The Maori economy is very amenable to medical treatment, far more so than the European. Drugs which fail to affect the white man to any extent produce the most sensible results on the Native, and often exert a wonderfully curative effect. Fractures, cuts, and other solutions of continuity, heal rapidly, without leaving any unpleasant sequelæ; and had my patients more substantial food than the potato, I should be better able to congratulate myself on their treatment.

The sick Maori often craves for what he calls pakeha food, but, if he is supplied with it, the cook and cooking utensils must be given him as well. With the use of his own food, the Native suffers from a persistent anorexia, which cannot be matter for surprise when it is considered what that food is.

A great number of cases result fatally by slow asthenia from inanition, their food being deficient in the nitrogenized particles forming tissue, and badly cooked. Their dirty whares without chimneys, insufficient clothing, conjugal consanguinity—in fact, a total disregard of the most essential laws of sanitation—have succeeded, in spite of this very healthy climate, in establishing scrofulous diathesis, which manifests itself in many forms of disease.

The Taupo Natives may be said to enjoy an immunity from skin diseases, when compared with the Coast Natives. There is, however, a strange form of skin disease which affects the face and extremities, called by the Natives “*ngerengere*,” considered by Dr. A. Thompson a species of elephantiasis gracorum, or leprosy of the Greeks, &c., and which he proposes calling “*lepra gangrænosa*.” I have treated three cases of this very singular disease. I find among the Maoris it is contagious; but they affirm that we are proof against it. This is not correct, as I have seen one white man with which the disease was so far developed as to be unmistakable. The history of the case pointed to infection by direct contagion. I found (if I may be allowed to