

HURRICANE.

On the 13th and 14th January last a very severe hurricane was experienced in Niue. On the afternoon of the 11th January the barometer commenced to fall, and continued falling gradually, until at noon on the 12th January the barometer showed 29.50. As the fall still continued, mounted messengers were despatched to all parts of the island to warn the people of the probable approach of a hurricane, and to direct them to take steps to safeguard their houses, stock, &c. The barometer continued to fall, and at 3 a.m. on the 13th January, with the barometer at 29.33, the wind commenced to blow with hurricane force from the south-east, and continued until 6 a.m. on the 14th, when its fury abated. The lowest barometer-reading was 28.99, at 6 a.m. on the 13th January. A noteworthy feature was that the hurricane came from the south-east and kept in that quarter, with but slight variation, during the whole period of the storm.

The Natives are unanimous in saying that the recent storm was the most severe experienced in Niue within their memory, and the damage wrought has been very heavy. At Mutalau the large church was completely destroyed, and the church at Lakepa was unroofed, while several churches in other villages were considerably damaged. Altogether there were 992 Native houses and huts blown down, and 12,647 bearing coconut-trees were destroyed. The Native huts destroyed were, for the most part, the "fale pola," or frames covered with sugar and coconut-leaf thatch, and are easily replaced. By far the most serious loss is the 12,647 bearing coconut-trees, which will mean an annual loss of income to the Natives for the next ten or twelve years until other trees come on to take their places. The bearing-trees destroyed represent about 4 per cent. of the total trees on the island that have reached the bearing stage.

At the time of the hurricane there was a heavy crop of coconuts on the trees, and with few exceptions they were all blown down. As only a small proportion of those nuts are sufficiently mature for copra-making, the loss sustained under this head was considerable.

The coconut-trees that have weathered the storm bear a very dilapidated appearance, and it will probably take them at least a year to pick up again. As regards the food crops, nearly all the banana and breadfruit trees were blown down, but the taro and other root crops have not suffered to any extent.

While the Natives will suffer considerably, and will have to economize in many ways, I do not think there will be any shortage of food. Since the hurricane the Natives have been very busy repairing the damages, rebuilding their houses, and making new food-plantations. Already the island is beginning to look quite itself again, the vegetation everywhere having made a wonderful recovery.

The barometer-readings taken during the storm, which may be found interesting, were as follows :—

January 12—		January 13—	
9 a.m.	29.95	10 p.m.	29.08
10 a.m.	29.53	11 p.m.	29.15
Noon	29.50	January 14—	
2 p.m.	29.48	2 a.m.	29.18
4 p.m.	29.44	3 a.m.	29.22
11 p.m.	29.41	4 a.m.	29.24
January 13—		6 a.m.	29.35
3 a.m.	29.33	8 a.m.	29.48
9 a.m.	29.23	9 a.m.	29.50
Noon	29.18	1.30 p.m.	29.57
1.30 p.m.	29.13	2 p.m.	29.56
3.30 p.m.	29.04	2.45 p.m.	29.53
6 p.m.	28.99	4 p.m.	29.57
8 p.m.	29.04		

All the above readings were recorded on a standard Fortin barometer.

PUBLIC WORKS.

Owing to the fall in the revenue and the disturbed condition of trade, there has been but little money available for public works. However, the sum of £585 16s. 5d. was spent as follows :—

Peta Hill (Widening and Regrading).—A full account of this work was given in my last report. The £143 9s. 4d. which falls into this year's account represents payments for work done after the end of the last financial year.

Additions to Medical Officer's Residence.—A new addition to the house has been made, comprising a bathroom, a new storeroom, also a kitchen. Water supplied from an elevated tank is laid on to the bathroom and kitchen, while suitable drains have been laid. The cost was £79 9s. 11d.

Additions to Headmaster's Residence.—These additions include an extra bedroom (detached), also a bathroom and storeroom. The bathroom is supplied with water from an elevated tank, and suitable drainage has been provided. The total cost was £152 7s. 1d.

Additions to Police Officer's Residence.—These include a detached kitchen and stove, also a water-tank. The total cost was £19 10s. 6d.

Furniture for Government Residences.—Owing to frequent changes in the staff and the heavy charges made for carrying furniture and household goods from and to New Zealand, it has been decided to gradually furnish all the Government residences with plain substantial furniture, excepting glass-ware, crockery, cutlery, pictures, and house-linen. The sum of £110 5s. 2d. was spent in completing the furnishing of the Medical Officer's residence, and providing necessary furniture for the Police Officer's residence.