

New Zealand.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON VACCINATION.

Your Committee appointed the 21st June, 1854, to consider "the best means of introducing the most complete system of vaccination amongst the Natives," having taken evidence thereon and maturely considered the same, have agreed to the following report.

They think that no time ought to be lost in protecting the Aborigines of the Colony as widely and extensively as possible, from the dangers of small pox by means of vaccination.

With regard to the efficacy of vaccination as a protective agent, your Committee do not deem it necessary to adduce evidence. They will merely state what is admitted by the best Medical authorities to be a fact; that amongst Europeans before the practice of inoculation, the deaths from the disease were in the ratio of one half of those attacked. After the practice of inoculation had been introduced, the proportion of deaths was not more than one in five hundred, and since vaccination has become general in Europe the disease of small pox, one of the most loathsome and fatal scourges of the human species has been robbed of nearly all its terrors.

All concurrent testimony goes to prove, that in the colored races of men, small pox is more virulent and fatal than in the fair skinned races, while among savages, their personal habits, mode of life, and ignorance of proper treatment combine to disseminate the disease with frightful rapidity, and to give to it a most malignant and exterminating character.

The disappearance of the Aboriginal inhabitants of the North American continent, is mainly to be ascribed to the ravages of small pox. It is on record (vide Catlin's North American Indians,) that out of a tribe of 2,000 attacked by small pox, in the year 1837, in a few months only 35 survived. Your Committee cannot doubt, that results somewhat similar would follow upon its introduction into these islands; and that a most interesting race of men just emerging from barbarism, would, under the breath of this fatal disease, be added to the long list of coloured races, who have disappeared before the advancing footstep of the colonist.

They have in evidence from good authority, that not more than one tenth of the native inhabitants of the Northern Island, comprising nearly the whole of the native population have received the protection of vaccination. They deem it a paramount duty on the part of the European colonists of the country, to extend to the maori people, that protection which they have themselves received, and owe to their superior civilization. And they may be allowed, perhaps, to add, that

no circumstance could more suitably inaugurate the era of Representative Government, or tend more surely to establish it in the confidence of the Native inhabitants, than a measure like this, which should unanswerably demonstrate to them that their health, even their existence is an object of anxious solicitude to their white burthen.

In considering the speediest and most practicable means of vaccinating the Natives, your Committee have not been met by any difficulty arising out of objections or disinclination on the part of the Natives themselves. They are led to believe on the other hand, that the Natives already are partly acquainted with the objects of vaccination, and anxious to avail themselves of the protection it affords.

The enquiry of your Committee was therefore narrowed almost entirely to a consideration of the agency by which it can be most widely and rapidly accomplished. The existence of a large number of Missionaries of different denominations in various parts of the country, established originally for the purpose of converting the native people to Christianity, and at all times zealous in the promotion of anything calculated to advance their welfare, of course, suggested itself to your Committee; and they feel assured, that in promoting so good a work as this, the House may reckon with confidence on the active and cheerful co-operation of the Missionaries of all creeds throughout New Zealand.

A second agency, and one directly under the control of the Government, exists in the various Colonial Surgeons throughout the country, whose services in the cause would be most valuable, not only in actively themselves vaccinating the Natives, but also by acting as instructors to the Missionaries, and by supplying them from time to time with Lymph and proper instruments. But in order to give unity of design and completeness to the work contemplated, and with a view to carrying it out hereafter among the Maori children, your committee would recommend that a Central Board should be established whose duty it should be to superintend and promote vaccination throughout the Colony, and they think that such Board might consist of the Native Secretary, of the Colonial Surgeon, of the Heads of the various Missionary Bodies, and of such other persons as His Excellency might consider qualified to give advice or assistance. And they are of opinion that until the natives generally have been vaccinated, two professional vaccinators should be sent among them to travel about and operate upon all who are willing to submit to it. These professional vaccinators might also visit the different Mission stations, supplying them with lymph and instruments, and giving instruction where required.

To prepare the natives for the visits of these gentlemen, and induce them to avail themselves of their services your Committee are of opinion that a short treatise on Small Pox and Vaccination should be printed in the Maori tongue and circulated amongst them as widely as possible, and they venture to suggest that it might produce the best effect upon the Native mind if they were given to understand, that it was the result of the solicitude of the Representatives of New Zealand for their health and welfare. But what ever may be decided upon with reference to this question, your Committee venture to express an earnest hope that it may be done speedily and as completely as possible.

It must be obvious that the great facilities of inter-communication which now exist between different parts of the world, while attended with incalculable advantage to the best interest of mankind, at the same time, and by the same reason have a tendency to propagate disease. The appearance of contagious diseases of every description is therefore a thing which may be looked for at any time, and against which every prudent precaution ought to be taken. Should Small Pox be introduced into New Zealand before the Natives are protected, its ravages may be expected to be fearful; nor could the disease be general or fatal among the Natives without its violence falling in some measure upon the white population. Every consideration therefore urges us to the step of protecting the natives by means of a general system of vaccination.

In the complete carrying out of such a measure not only is our own safety involved, but our character, as an offshoot from that great country which claims in her treatment of the barbarous peoples over whom in different parts of her Empire she rules, the preeminence of justice and humanity.

ROBERT HART,

Chairman.

July 14, 1854.

MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE.

WEDNESDAY, 5th JULY, 1854.

Present ;—Messrs. Crompton, Hart, Macandrew, Drs. Monroe, Bacot, and Lee

FRIDAY 7th JULY, 1854.

Present :—Mr. Hart, Drs. Monroe, Bacot, and Lee.

TUESDAY 11th JULY, 1854.

Adjourned to Wednesday.

WEDNESDAY, 12th JULY, 1854.

Present :—Drs. Monroe, Bacot, Lee, Messrs. Crompton and Hart

ROBERT HART,

Chairman.

