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The Maoris of New Zealand.

(By Mary V. G. Woolley, in 'The New Voice.')

The Maoris are the finest of all the aboriginal peoples I have seen, though many things which they have in common with the Hawaiians and Samoans make it probable that all the South Sea Islanders are related to each other. In fact I think that the peculiarity of the Hawaiians, with their pretty poetical and artistic ways of weaving the leis and making fine mats and fans, is only a matter of environment. They have a tropical island, with no cold, and only flowers and fine grasses to dress themselves with, while the people who come from there to the shores of this colder island, found the native flax, a coarser fibre, out of which they made their coverings and their 'kits' (baskets) and mats; and the necessities of their surroundings made them more warlike and at the same time harder and less poetic. Their very language—though similar to the Hawaiians—shows this difference. In Hawaii the universal greeting is 'aloha,' which means 'love,' while in Maori it is 'aroha,' meaning 'welcome.'

While I am theorizing let me give you another of my theories: The Maoris are very fine looking except that they have flat noses. When they meet one another, instead of merely shaking hands or greeting each other as we do, they press their noses together in the most solemn fashion. My theory is that long years of this custom have made their noses flat, and that if it were stopped, coming generations might have fine straight noses.

It is very funny to see two people greet one another in this unique fashion. I saw two well dressed women meet in the main street in New Plymouth, and before they spoke a word grasp hands and press noses, and then begin to talk just as any other two women would. In Wellington two Maori gentlemen met, solemnly raised their hats with the left hand, grasped each other by the right and pressed noses—all this without a word. We went to the funeral of a Maori chief. The coffin was in the front porch covered with a mat and in it a large oil painting of the deceased, with two others of near relatives, and many green stone (jade) ornaments and weapons. We were introduced to the immediate friends, fine looking men in civilian uniform, one in a soldier's uniform, and noticed as the friends came they greeted each other in true Maori fashion, pressed noses, and then commenced wailing, moving back and forth and keeping up a peculiar cry. To persevere in this strange fashion, in the face of the customs of civilization, shows in itself a strong nature, and they are strong. They, of all the South Sea natives, have kept themselves separate from the whites and are increasing in numbers, while the races of the adjoining islands are gradually dying out. They are in complexion rich sienna, with black hair and perfect teeth, well proportioned, of good height, and very handsome.

One of the handsomest women I saw in New Zealand was a Maori, dressed in a beautiful French costume. The same evening I had two gentlemen, in full evening dress,

pointed out to me as Maoris, and when I remembered that this evolution has taken only fifty years (for New Zealand civilization is only fifty years old) I felt convinced that they were the most intelligent native race in existence. Of this I am sure, for I have heard Maori members of the House of Representatives take part in important discussions, and do it well. Of course all the Maoris have not become so civilized. In Rotorua, the 'wonderland of New Zealand,' you may see them among more primitive conditions.

The Maoris are now almost entirely confined to the North Island, there being only

of the way. Before the dinner hour we walked to Ohinemutu, about a mile from our hotel, and saw the open-air life of the Maoris to perfection. Some were cooking their supper in the boiling, bubbling, spluttering holes, by letting down the basket or 'kit' of potatoes and other vegetables, to leave them until cooked—no fire, no watching, oceans of hot water ready at a moment's notice. It really was a very simple way to live, and saved so much trouble. In one hole, not so hot, I saw a girl washing dishes. Children were standing up to their necks in natural baths, and swimming like so many fish; while many men and women,



MAORIS AT HOME.

Corner of carved 'whare' (house) showing chief and wife dressed in flax mats. The chief wears the hul feather and is armed with the 'mere'—a club of green stone, wood or bone.

comparatively few in the Northwestern part of the South Island, and it was with the greatest pleasure that we found that a visit had been planned for us to Rotorua, which name covers the townships of Ohinemutu and Rotorua and the Maori village of Whakarewarewa. We reached Rotorua about 5 p.m., after a day's journey by rail through some of the fine 'bush' scenery in 'the ranges,' with deep gorges covered with great ferns—the fern tree growing thirty feet high in many places, while the New Zealand cabbage trees shook their plumed heads at us most

wrapped in blankets, were lying or squatting on slabs of stone placed over the warmer spots and smoking or sleeping.

It was a curious sight and one I shall never forget. We returned to the hotel for our dinner and in the evening had a dip in the Madame Rachel bath, which was the most delicious I ever had. It left one's skin feeling like velvet. All these baths have world-wide reputation and are under the care of a resident physician maintained by the government, and marvellous cures are effected by them. There is a great sani-