

### The Maori of Olden Times.

*New Zealand Board of Science and Art. Manual No. 4: The Maori as he was; a Brief Account of Maori Life as it was in Pre-European Days.* By Elsdon Best. Pp. xv + 280. (Wellington, N.Z.: Dominion Museum, 1924.) n.p.

MR. ELSDON BEST has written for the New Zealand Board of Missions an account of the Maori when they first became known to Europeans, interpreted in the light of later knowledge, and by his own familiar acquaintance with native customs and ideas. The work covers the whole range of Maori anthropology.

Two distinct physical types of native are said to occur. One, long-headed and prognathous, approaches the Fijian; the other, with broader head and orthognathous, is the common Polynesian. The hair is commonly black and waved, though frizzled hair is sometimes seen.

In a chapter on traditional history, Mr. Best very briefly reviews the native accounts of the peopling of New Zealand, especially those preserved by tribes on the east coast of North Island. These traditions indicate an original Polynesian migration from lands in the west called Uru and Irihia. Following Conder and Percy Smith, it is suggested that Uru is the Biblical Ur, and that Irihia is connected with Sanskrit and Dravidian words for rice—*vrihi* and *ari*. These are mere guesses. A summary is given of the more important Polynesian voyages which led to the settlement of New Zealand.

The mythology and folklore form an interesting chapter in which the author stresses the Maori genius for personification and its application to natural phenomena, and the evolution of such myths as that of the green-stone, fabulous monsters and fairies. A summary of the religious ideas of the Maori follows, a subject with which Mr. Best has dealt more fully elsewhere (cf. *NATURE*, June 9, 1923, p. 790).

Like other Polynesians, the Maori were communists in social custom. The proceedings of the family, clan and tribe, and the power and prestige of the chief, were closely influenced and controlled by public opinion, and the same force maintained law and order and regulated the relations of the three classes of the community, chiefs, commoners and slaves. The Maori was a sociable being, living in village communities. He took his meals in the open, and was hospitable and fond of conversation, story-telling and amusement. Men only engaged in occupations in which *tapu* was prominent, such as house-building, canoe-making, crop-planting and the obtaining of food. In the last work women helped, especially in gathering shell-fish, but

they were more especially engaged in preparing and cooking food and in the manipulation of the flax fibres and the manufacture of clothing, plaited mats and baskets. This chapter concludes with a brief account of birth, marriage and funeral customs. Birth, death and exhumation were marked by much ritual; marriage and burial by less. An infant underwent the rites of *tohi* and *pure*. The first is described by Mr. Best as a kind of baptism, the second as a greeting to the child. Betrothal, sometimes of infants, might be arranged before marriage, and marriage by capture sometimes took place. The dead were buried in a sitting position, but the remains were exhumed with much ceremony after a few years, and finally conveyed to a distant cave or hollow tree.

Mr. Best's chapter on the arts of life occupies half the book, and is exceedingly well illustrated. He describes the arts of pleasure, war, agriculture, woodcraft, textiles, clothing and ornaments, habitations and fishing. The Maori's implements were crude and primitive. Fire was produced by rubbing one stick on another. There was no loom; the cloaks of flax fibre were made by interlaced and tied threads, not by true weaving. Adzes were of stone, agricultural implements of wood. A simple drill was used, and Mr. Best figures a tree-felling machine on the principle of the Roman *ballista*. House-building is described in detail. The Maori was an expert carver. His decorative art is remarkable for curvilinear forms, in contrast to the commoner rectilinear designs of Polynesia. Tattooing was practised by both sexes; by men on face and body, by women usually on the lips and chin only.

Fishing and bird-trapping provided the chief animal food of the Maori. The dog and rat were articles of luxury. Fishing nets and traps were of great variety. Some, of immense size, astonished early European visitors.

Mr. Best has produced a very useful little book, which will inform and interest the traveller or the tourist, and provide a useful syllabus for the serious student of Maori thought and custom. There is a short bibliography, a good index, and more than 130 illustrations of persons and objects.

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### Fundamentalism and Science.

*The Relation between Science and Theology: How to Think about It.* By C. Stuart Gager. Pp. vi + 87. (Chicago and London: The Open Court Publishing Co., 1925.) 1 dollar.

THIS book is a very useful piece of anti-Fundamentalist polemic. The underlying causes of that strange reaction have been diagnosed by Prof.