

Supplies of food have been plentiful generally throughout the district, and two new articles of food, Indian corn and peanuts, are being grown.

Four members of the Winiapi tribe joined the police as recruits.

A homicide presenting some peculiar features took place among the Kikinava. An elderly man died suddenly, probably from heart failure, a sorcerer claimed to have caused the death by witchcraft, the villagers seized the sorcerer, speared him, and then ripping him open, crammed portions of the deceased sorcerer's viscera down his own throat (the act taking place before the sorcerer's son), and then totally abandoned the village. Village constables from an adjacent village successfully arrested the offenders, but it was easy to see that horrible though the act appears, the sympathy of the tribes was with the culprits, and it is not difficult in this instance to follow the native chain of reasoning.

A steady increase is taking place in the population by excess of births over deaths among the people of Cape Nelson and Collingwood Bay, and unless recurrent epidemics of disease take the place of the old-time fierce inter-tribal fighting, with its consequent heavy female and infant mortality, it is likely to continue.

No indictable offence of any description has taken place among either Cape Nelson or Collingwood Bay tribes.

A somewhat remarkable instance of native superstition is reported by Mr. Oelrichs, Assistant Resident Magistrate, in a district report relative to a murder inquiry held by that officer. Mr. Oelrichs writes:—"Rather a curious story regarding the alleged bewitching came out in the course of the examination of some men during the inquiry, and I found it was the general belief in the district (Maisina and Wanigela). When a man dies suddenly it is supposed that when the deceased was last in the bush he was met by some persons unknown who, it is surmised, live in a swamp, the man is caught and held by the unknown persons, and a vine twisted round his throat so as to throttle him, when the victim faints, the vine is released and he is brought round by the application of New Guinea drugs and placed on his feet."

"One of the strangers then steps forward and says—'Do you know us?' if the subject of the inquiry replies 'No,' he is again asked—'Will you tell your people what has been done to you?' Should he reply in the affirmative he is immediately thrown down again, and this time a thorny lawyer vine is forced into his gullet and violently withdrawn so as to tear the root of the tongue. He is again then asked the question, but is, of course, unable to reply; the man is then badly mauled, and allowed to return to his village, where he dies. At his own village he is able to speak on any subject but the one in reference to the treatment he has received."

It is hardly necessary to remark that fanciful beliefs of such nature floating through a witness' mind do not tend to clear the point at issue.

In some excavations carried out by the mission and natives at Rainu, in Collingwood Bay, an interesting discovery was made of an old village site of a forgotten people, and a quantity of broken and ancient pottery found of curious and antique design and shapes. The pottery was much superior to any now made or in use, and there is no tradition or record of the people by whom it was made. Among human remains, at a depth of 4 feet, two fragments of carved shell were found, placed, I think, originally in graves. The art of carving on hard shells is not now practised. I attach rough drawings of shells and of some fragments of pottery.

A good track has been cleared by the Cape Vogel natives from Mukawa to Iasi-Iasi.

The Kaili-Kaili tribe supplies the carriers for His Excellency the Acting Administrator's journey to Papangi, behind the Hydrographer's Range, from Ketakerua Bay in the early part of the year, and though smitten with measles and suffering much from the hardships incidental to such a journey, they showed most praiseworthy courage and loyalty, and to them was due, in large measure, the success of the expedition.

Some 30 men from this tribe formed the nucleus of the working gangs on the Yodda Valley-road construction work.

The tribes of Oro Bay and inland district have not received attention, but in the absence of a vessel it is not possible to do anything with them, the appointment of village constables is useless unless such village constables are regularly visited and supported.

GAOL.

Health and conduct of prisoners have been good. In all, 216 prisoners have been received or discharged from the prison, showing a decrease of 35 on the figures for last year. One death occurred from pneumonia. Three escapes have been made, two of the men being later recaptured, the third remaining yet at large. The prisoners are mainly fed on native food, partly grown on the station, and partly purchased from surrounding tribes.

VILLAGE CONSTABLES.

On the effectiveness and efficiency of this service to a great measure depends the conduct of the tribes, and the increase or decrease of crime. There are at present 27 village constables, an increase of one on last year. They have, as usual, performed excellent work in maintaining order among the various people, and have effected most of the arrests made. Several of the local village constables have been employed in the Northern Division in connexion with work on the Yodda Valley-road as gangers or in charge of stores, with excellent results. One village constable was dismissed and sentenced to a term of imprisonment for assault, and later died in Port Moresby gaol of beri-beri.

Instances in this district of abuse of power or extortion by village constables are very rare, and, when they do occur, are usually in consequence of the man having been left unvisited for a long period.

ARMED NATIVE CONSTABULARY.

The detachment of armed native constabulary at this point consists of 25 men. Fifteen of the men have been almost constantly engaged in work in the Northern Division for nine months. The detachment, as a whole, has maintained a good standard of efficiency and discipline. Two men have been dismissed for misconduct. Health has been good, and no deaths have occurred.

In consequence of charges of a serious nature having been brought against twelve men, an inquiry was asked for by me, and the men were committed by the Assistant Resident Magistrate at this point

Resident Magistrate Moresby (North-Eastern Division) writing