
A NEW DISPENSARY IS OPENED.

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To the Kabara people the recent establishment of the new dispensary is one of the most important forward steps the Fiji Medical Department has ever taken. According to the state of minds they are now in. As for your readers of the *Medical Journal*, however, I doubt if such news would create the slightest bit of a sensation.

How the Kabara people received me was, frankly speaking, to me the gayest receptional ceremonies that ever I saw.

Their joy and happiness on the day of my arrival was indescribable. It seemed to me that the dawning of a new era could hardly have raised such rejoicings. In fact they did not come far short of hero-worshipping.

Such was the overwhelming way I was received, in this Island of Kabara. While in Suva, last August 1948, I could not help but receive reluctantly the order to establish a new dispensary in this isolated island.

My first few days here completely stamped out my old illusions of hardships, which I had anticipated and dreaded while at Suva. I am writing now after two months of my being here and gladly I find myself considering my new post as far from bad.

To be exact, I with my luggages, (drugs, instruments, etc.) which were ordered before my leaving Suva, arrived and was put ashore in Naikaleyaga village, Kabara, on the evening of the 31st of August, 1948.

Gladly the people showed me my two identical twin houses. They stood over to the S.W. end of the village, commanding a good view of the anchorage passage. According to the people the houses had been awaiting an A.M.P. for quite some months. The approximate measurements of each house are three fathoms by two and a half fathoms.

The following days brought in crowds of people from all the villages in the island. Practically every man, woman and child, I think, came to see me. Most of them, I supposed, such was their behaviour, came just to give me the usual Fijian country folk's "once over", I noted also that they not only gave me and my belongings the "once over", but they also "looked into", "looked around", "looked under", which they knew by the way of my looking at them was not at all to be encouraged.

But, as to the older folks, to my delight they came just to help. Always, the regular Fijians have one thing in common, not of course excluding me, and that is the desire to please others, and most especially strangers. Fortunately I knew that, and at once took advantage of same.

I made them work and sweat, those first few days, for the benefit of the dispensary. The odd little jobs were finished in suprisingly short time. And at the end of the second day the compound which previously was overgrown and weedy, was cleared, drugs were carefully unpacked, a temporary pit latrine was put up, and many other things were soon completed. From the two identical twin houses I chose the one nearer the winding sandy beach to be my sleeping house. The other was fitted out as the dispensary.

In the dispensary the old village carpenter, with as much enthusiasm as any, helped me in the putting up of temporary shelves, partly by nailing together empty drug cases. That done, we arranged, then re-arranged, the drugs and what little instruments I brought with me, suiting our taste of orderliness. Added to the above temporary collection of shelves, etc., the old but enthusiastic carpenter, under my direction although my knowledge of carpentry is very raw, cleverly made a temporary operating table, stable and firm, and the same is serving admirably well.

A "carrier", with the help of the district headman, was chosen by me when I arrived. The authority for this had been granted me by the D.M.S. before my leaving Suva for Kabara. He is doing his work very well.

This dispensary is to look after the Kabara district. The same consists of three rocky and very dry coral islands lying approximately to the S.E. of Lakeba island, Lau.

The islands are: Kabara island proper, on which the dispensary is situated. It is the largest and the most densely populated island of the three.

Secondly, Namuka island, lying N.N.E. of Kabara, about 20 miles in that direction. Its one and only village is said to be one of the biggest villages in all Fiji.

Thirdly, Koma island, the smallest of three islands, and it also has only one village.

The district's total population is about 1,300 people only. The only means of transportation here is unreliable canoes.

The above is roughly an account of how Kabara dispensary was put up, and in this new dispensary I will to the best of my ability try always to keep the ever spreading "Medicine torch" brightly burning.
