

ABORIGINAL TRAITS

Overgrown Children, says Sir B. Spencer

NOT LIKE MAORIS

Referring today to the Rev. T. Beaston's statement that the Australian aborigine was more intellectual, though less enterprising and warlike than the Maori, Sir Baldwin Spencer, our greatest authority on the Australasian native races, said:—

"I cannot agree with Mr Beaston as to the aborigine's mental capacity, although I am in full sympathy with his anxiety that we should do all in our power to improve the black-fellow's position.

"It is true that aboriginal children, up to the age of leaving school, learn as quickly as white children, but the whole question of their further education is conditioned by their brains, which have not yet developed the number or depth of convolutions to enable them to absorb any higher forms of knowledge than those taught in elementary schools.

LIMIT OF DEVELOPMENT

"Therefore, although the aborigine at 14 years is as intelligent as his white brother, he has reached the limit of his mental capacity. Except in extremely rare cases, his adult mentality is never more than that of a white child of 14.

"He is like an overgrown child in matters of character and emotional expression. He is as affectionate, or, in other cases, as mischievous, as a child, and as irresponsible.

"His greatest drawback in civilised life is a lack of concentration that unfits him for continued effort. The novelty of any kind of work quickly palls on him, and then he is no longer able to apply himself to it.

HOPE FOR HALF-CASTES

"Much can be done, and is being done, however, by the mission stations in Australia to educate the blacks and employ them usefully at work within their power, and which they do under supervision. It may be that they could eventually be settled in the cultivation of market gardens or similar work which is done by coolies throughout the East, but even in that it is questionable if the blacks themselves could ever provide the necessary supervision to keep the laborers at work.

"In Central Australia an effort is being made to encourage the inter-marriage of half-castes, but it is too early yet to say whether in this way a new race could be stabilised.

"If it can, that, to my mind, will be the solution of the problem of the aborigine. The half-caste is often as intelligent as the average white. But there is far too great a difference in the mentality of the blacks and the whites, for the former ever to be absorbed by inter-marriage, as the Maoris are being absorbed in New Zealand."