

finding that they could not get her back by threats, gave in, and allowed me to settle the case, which I did by letting the girl take her own choice, she of course preferring her own tribe. The old hostile feeling between the tribes which have been at war with each other is of course often cropping up (more especially between the Ngatipukeko and the Urewera); but, on being appealed to, they have always allowed me to mediate, and no doubt are glad of having any dispute settled without either side having to give in—saving their dignity by giving in to the law.

The interest felt by Natives in electoral matters is steadily increasing, and I think should be fostered, as showing them a way in which they may exert their influence legitimately. I not only refer to the Native Members—several candidates are already canvassing for the next election,—but I notice a good many new claims from Natives to be placed on the electoral roll of the East Coast District.

Considerable attention is given to the Native Councils Act, which it is understood the Government intend to introduce into Parliament next Session, and the draft of which has been circulated. The Natives generally approve of the Act; the difficulty in regard to it will be, I gather, the boundaries of the districts to be proclaimed under it, if passed.

As I am writing, the news of the late murder in the Waikato, and of the steps taken by Government in relation to it, is getting circulated. The general feeling appears to be that the murderer should be brought to justice, and that there is no chance of a lasting peace until the Kingite league is broken up.

IV.—*Public Works undertaken by Natives.*

Since my last report, the following public works have been carried out in this district by Natives:—

Opotiki and East Cape Road.—The Ngaitai Tribe have made a good bridle-track from Opape to Awakino—two miles,—the rest of the road between Opape and Torere being already in a satisfactory condition. They have also formed a bridle-road from Torere to Tunapahore, two and a half miles—a portion of this work being some heavy cutting through rock. The Whanau a Apanui Tribe have accepted a contract to cut and form a bridle road, five and a half miles long, through the heavy bush between Maraenui and Omaio. They have not yet commenced work, but are to do so as soon as they have reaped their crops. This is now one of the worst roads in the district, and its completion will be a boon to the Natives themselves, as well as to the Europeans who may have occasion to travel that way. Further on, the Whanau a Te Hutu are anxious to make a road from Te Kaha to Raukokore (an almost impassable track at present). I doubt not arrangements will shortly be complete for their doing so, and I hope that next year I shall be able to report that the East Cape road has been continued, and formed a junction with the roads in the adjoining Waiapu district.

The Opotiki and Ormond road (eighty miles) has been let by contract to Messrs. Simpson, surveyors. They have commenced work at both ends. On the Poverty Bay end they have a mixed party of Europeans and Natives working, and, I am informed, have twenty miles completed. This end of the road, as far as the Motu River (forty miles), they sublet to the Whakatohea Tribe, who engaged to cut the bush and form the road for a fixed sum, the greater part being through a rugged mountainous country, as unpromising as could well be imagined for road-making purposes. At first, this tribe worked with great vigour and industry; but I regret to state that, owing to a misunderstanding with the contractors, they abandoned the work when they had completed seven and a half miles, and I fear will not resume it, and that the road will eventually have to be finished by European labour. The ostensible cause of their striking was a frivolous one; but I believe the real reason is that they found the work more arduous than they anticipated, and that they had taken the sub-contract at a price at which they could not make wages.

The other road in this district on which Natives have been employed is the Opotiki and Te Waimana road; that section of it between an arm of the Ohiwa and the confiscated boundary line in the Waimana valley. This road is in course of formation by the Urewera and Upokorehe. The Urewera, as might be expected from a tribe living in a highland country, are steady opponents of roads; and it is with reluctance that they are forming this one, which, although it stops at the confiscation boundary, yet renders access to their country much easier than before. Indeed, it is only now they are convinced that the Government insist on the right of road-making through the confiscated territory, and that if they did not do it that others would, that they have consented to undertake it, having first, however, exacted a pledge that the road shall stop at the boundary line.

Now they have begun they are working well (the bridges put up by Tamaikowha being especially noticeable from their substantial construction); and if they had not had to leave off to get in their crops, the road would have been finished before now. In all works done by Natives, it must be remembered that they are done in addition to, and are greatly interrupted by, their ordinary avocations, and are never entered on, as by Europeans, as a means of earning a livelihood.

V.—*Native Schools.*

During the past year arrangements have been made for building and opening schools in different parts of the district.

A school intended for the children of both Europeans and Natives is in operation at Opotiki, under Mr. Martin, a teacher of experience. It is at present carried on in a temporary building, but the new schoolhouse is nearly finished. This is built on a reserve of four acres granted by the General Government for educational purposes, and is estimated to cost when complete £200, of which £100 is given by the General Government, £50 by the Provincial Board of Education, and £50 is raised by subscriptions of the European inhabitants. The building would have been finished long ago, but for the difficulty of making arrangements with the Provincial Board for a mixed school, this being the first one of the sort established. The school is under the control of the Board, but, unlike other Provincial schools, is open to all Natives who choose to attend it. I regret to say, however, that not many have availed themselves of this privilege, and that those who do, attend but irregularly; two or three, however, have made good progress in elementary learning.