

No. 16.

The RESIDENT MAGISTRATE, Rangitikei, to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Office, Marton, 18th May, 1874.

I have the honor, in forwarding this, my annual report on the condition of the Natives in the Otaki, Manawatu, and Rangitikei districts, to state that during the past year only two occurrences worthy of note have happened. The first was the Horowhenua dispute, between Muaupoko and Ngatiraukawa, which came to a head in December last, when Kawana Hunia took the law into his own hands, and attempted to assert his right over the land by burning a whare and destroying crops belonging to Ngatiraukawa. This provoked reprisals, and the two parties threatened to fight the quarrel out. Blood might have been shed but for the prompt interference of Mr. J. Booth, R.M., who was in the neighbourhood at the time, engaged in his duties as Land Purchase Commissioner. In January of this year the Hon. the Defence Minister was himself able to be at Otaki, and take the management of the dispute into his own hands. Kawana Hunia was summoned to Wellington to answer for his actions in burning and destroying crops. He appeared to answer the charge, but the prosecution was withdrawn. The prosecution, however, has done good, as it has proved to the Maoris that none of their chiefs are above the reach of the law.

The other occurrence has been the action of Mr. A. McDonald, at Awahuri, who on two occasions has committed violent and premeditated breaches of the law, with the intention, as he states, of asserting the rights of Ngatikauwhata against the Government, alleging that Ngatikauwhata have been aggrieved in the matter of the issue of Crown grants for their reserves in the Manawatu Block. In January last McDonald destroyed a survey station, for which act he was fined £10 in the Resident Magistrate's Court at Wellington.

On the 30th April he shot at and wounded a horse in a coach that was being driven across the Oroua Bridge at Awahuri, to be placed on the subsidized line of coaches from Palmerston to Waipukurau. Mr. McDonald has been committed for trial for the above offence, and is now out on bail.

Mr. McDonald describes himself as an adopted member of Ngatikauwhata, and as their agent and servant; but in my opinion he is rather the originator and instigator of all the opposition to the settlement of the reserves.

For the rest, many claims to land have been decided by the Native Lands Court, and a considerable portion of the land has been sold to the Government. On other portions advances have been made or they are under offer.

During the year the Natives from Waikanae migrated to Waitara.

The money that has been paid to the Maoris for land has kept them from want, and there has been less agriculture amongst them than in former years. I have not, in any single instance during the year, experienced any difficulty in obtaining the appearance of Natives to answer summonses, or in executing warrants.

I have, &c.,

WM. J. WILLIS,

Resident Magistrate.

The Hon. the Native Minister, Wellington.

No. 17.

Rev. J. W. STACK to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER.

SIR,—

Kaiapoi, 21st May, 1874.

I have the honor, in accordance with your instruction, to forward enclosed report on the Canterbury Natives:—

REPORT ON THE CANTERBURY MAORIS FOR 1873-74.

I have referred in previous reports to the increasing poverty of the Natives: to this cause, in a great measure, may be attributed the meeting held at Kaiapoi on the 25th of March last, when 300 Natives from different parts of the Island, met to devise some scheme for acquiring more land and more money.

As long as the Maoris had sufficient food and clothing without requiring to make any extraordinary efforts, they were happy and contented. The relief from the state of constant dread of hostile attack in which they lived prior to the settlement of Europeans in the country, caused them to regard those whose presence secured to them the blessings of peace, as friends and benefactors; and the uniform kindness and fairness with which they—a numerically inferior race—were treated, was a constant theme of admiration, presenting as it did so marked a contrast to what their own conduct would have been under similar circumstances.

But too close contact with the pakeha has produced unhappiness and discontent; for whilst they have been deprived of many of their privileges and comforts, they have been forced to move onward in new paths faster than their natural inclinations prompted them. The modern Maori shrinks from regular labour and steadfast application to business. His habits of mind and body are the reverse of those required to secure the full benefits of civilization. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that the whole Native community rush eagerly after those who promise a golden harvest from the nonfulfilment of the Land Purchase Commissioners' agreements; nor that they should jealously guard against doing anything to prejudice their claim to that fabulous wealth which will procure for them ease and plenty without labour or exertion.

The procedure at the meeting was a strange medley of savage and civilized customs. The wild chant and violent gestures round the gory carcasses of oxen and sheep and piles of uncooked food, with which the proceedings opened, ill accorded with the burlesque imitation of parliamentary formalities with which the meeting was conducted throughout. The sobriety and general good behaviour of the Natives attending the meeting was worthy of all praise, and spoke well for their moral condition.