

The mortality amongst the Arawa has been of the usual average; there has been no epidemic raging among them, although I have been given to understand that fever of a typhoid kind has recently made its appearance at Te Wairoa, Tarawera. The only people of note who have died during the last year are Te Hauito, an old Ngatiwhakaue chief, and Miriata, wife of Rotohiko Haupapa, Native Assessor, of the same tribe, a woman much respected and esteemed by both Europeans and Natives. The cause of death in the former was old age; that of the latter, a comparatively young woman, dropsy and disease of the lungs. While on this subject, I wish to draw the attention of the Government to the want of a legally-qualified medical practitioner for the district. The Maketu inhabitants have been much beholden to the Native schoolmaster, Mr. Pinker, who through his intimate knowledge of homœopathy, and placing that knowledge at the disposal of his neighbours, has been of infinite service, especially to the Natives, who on the approach of any ailment at once have recourse to him, and he is invariably successful.

I am sorry to have to report that two cases of self-destruction have occurred in this district during the last year. The first was Hemana, a nephew of Te Pokiha Taranui, who committed suicide at Matata by shooting himself. It was anticipated at the time that hostilities between Ngatitakinga, a hapu of Ngatipikiao, and Ngatirangitahi would have arisen; but the difficulties were smoothed over. It is reported that a *hui* is shortly to take place at Maketu, when Hemana's bones will be removed to their final resting-place inland. This practice appears to be gaining ground amongst the Arawa, as the mortal remains of any person of the slightest consequence are carried inland. It is possible that they contemplate abandoning this part of the country to the Europeans, by selling to the Government. The other case was that of a young woman who hung herself at Ohinemutu. There was a strong suspicion at one time of foul play; but, on an investigation taking place, it was clearly proved to have been her own act.

Another cause of anxiety has arisen in this part of the country—namely, that of certain Natives being accused of practising witchcraft. I need scarcely mention the two cases which have recently been so prominently before the public: I allude to Himiona, tried at last Criminal sitting of the Supreme Court at Auckland for murder, and the Natives accused of killing Petera Koikoi; both occurrences happening within a short distance of the Arawa country. An old Native named Purangahia, of the Ngatipikiao tribe, residing at Te Taheke, distant some twenty-four miles from Maketu, was accused of sorcery, and was openly threatened with death if not taken away from that place; and it was deemed advisable to remove him under the protection of the police and bring him to Maketu, where he was placed in the hands of a married daughter, under whose guardianship he still remains, and all excitement appears to have subsided. Another noted wizard named Te Aokatoa, residing in the Patetere country, is openly accused of casting his spells over some Tuhourangi Natives, and two are said to have succumbed under their influence. A Tapuika Native, named Opaipa, has also been compelled to leave the district under similar accusations.

With regard to the Native schools, that at Maketu has decidedly improved in the number of attending scholars since last year, and the progress made is very marked. Matata still maintains its standard of attendance and improvement. Major Wood's reappointment to the Rotoiti school has not hitherto been of such advantage as might have been expected, but it has been caused by the school-room not being weatherproof, the attendance consequently being small; but it is anticipated that as the schoolroom has been lined and made serviceable in all weather, that I shall be able to forward a more favourable account in my next annual report. There is at present no school established at Ohinemutu, where it is much required; but tenders for construction of school buildings, including teacher's residence, have been forwarded to the Government for acceptance. The number of children attending the Wairoa school was small at the commencement of the year, but now averages thirty. Their improvement is perceptible.

The Natives did not plant any wheat last year, the cause, I apprehend, being the small amount they received for that article of produce the previous year. Some of their maize crops have been a success, others a comparative failure. Potatoes and kumeras have been, generally speaking, plentiful and cheap, especially up the Kaituna River, where the result of their cultivations has been very good, and they have potatoes at present in the market for sale. A step in the right direction has emanated from several Natives in Maketu and neighbourhood—a desire to fence in their lands. The great drawback is the insecure tenure, the title not being individualized; and there is no doubt that in special cases the decision of the Native Land Court would be deemed a great blessing, as it is only by a thorough, impartial investigation that the rightful owners to particular blocks, especially small ones, can be accurately ascertained.

With reference to public works, the road between Ohinemutu, Te Wairoa, and Tarawera is still incomplete, although a buggy can, by careful management, be driven through. There are two bridges necessary over the creek that runs from Rotokakahi Lake to the Tarawera Lake. One has been completed; but the other, that crosses the stream where it debouches from the Rotokakahi Lake, requires renewal. The road between Maketu and Ohinemutu is in a worse state than that mentioned in my last annual report. The road is more overgrown with shrubs and fern. The bridge over the Waiwhakareto Creek is now useless, and travellers using the road are now compelled to ford the stream, as was formerly done before the bridge was erected. A new culvert is also required over the swamp at the Nohonoa embankment which will shortly be impassable. There are several fissures in the road in very dangerous places, rendering it exceedingly unsafe to travel by night. Every month increases the danger; and unless something is speedily done, the road will be absolutely useless.

A Native meeting recently took place at Whakatane in their new carved house Mataatua. It was attended principally by Ngatiwhakaue, but I believe a few of some other sections of the Arawa also attended. I am given to understand that one of the prominent objects before the meeting was the consideration of a message received from Ngatikahungunu by Urupeni, son of Puhara Hawaikerangi, a very eminent chief of that tribe who fell in one of the engagements between Te Moananui and Te Hapuku, requesting the attendance of the whole of the tribes at a *hui* to be held at Pakowhai shortly, the purport of which, to bring about a unison of the whole of the tribes of New Zealand, "he