

During this year the Natives have grown larger grain crops than I have noticed for many years past. They are also improving their stock, especially horses, both draught and riding horses. Many of them own small flocks of sheep, and at every village may be seen ploughs, harrows, carts, &c. Many of the Natives have during the year executed legal leases of portions of their estate, and are now enjoying the benefits thereof. They seem, upon the whole, to be prosperous and contented.

2. Manawatu-Wellington District.

My remarks as to the general prosperity of the Natives in the Wanganui-Rangitikei District apply equally to the Natives of this district. There are, however, one or two interesting features in this which are not noticeable in the first mentioned; for instance, a very large majority of the Natives have now given up Hau-Hauism, and have returned to the Church. At Otaki, and one or two other places, almost the whole Native population attend church regularly every day, morning and evening; where there is a school, the children attend very regularly; and the leading chiefs of the Ngatiraukawa tribe have determined to build churches at all the more populous villages. At Otaki, three young men are preparing, under the Rev. J. McWilliam, to enter the Church of England as Deacons. There is a good (Bishop's) school at Otaki, where only English is taught; and a school is to be commenced this month at Awahuri.

I am sorry to say that drinking is very prevalent in this district. The majority of the Natives are fully alive to the evils of this vice, and the chiefs and teachers are making efforts to put it down.

In the month of April, Native Land Courts were held at Otaki, Foxton, and Bull's. A large majority of the cases had to be thrown out of Court, because the surveys were not reliable. This naturally caused disappointment, especially at Otaki, where the Natives had had their portions surveyed by licensed surveyors, and in most instances they had also paid the fees. It was explained to them that on the several isolated surveys being placed on the District Map, it was found that many of the claims overlapped, and some would not fit at all; and that to issue memorials of ownership on such plans would create great confusion, and give rise to future litigation. It was further promised that a new survey of all the rejected blocks should be made by the Government; and in cases where the fees had been paid to licensed surveyors, no additional charge should be made to the Native owners. The Natives expressed themselves quite satisfied with the explanation and promises.

In the month of March, the chief Matene te Whiwhi attended a large meeting in the Napier district. It was proposed at that meeting that a league should be formed, and all the tribes in the country invited to join it; the object of the league being the prevention of future sales or leases of land, either to Government or to private individuals, and that no roads or railways should be made through Native lands.

When Matene made his report to the Ngatiraukawa tribe they refused, one and all, to accept the proposals which were made to them, and they passed a resolution to the effect that none of their tribe should be allowed in future to attend political meetings. They further declared their loyalty to the Government, and their determination to live in obedience to the laws.

The Under Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

I have, &c.,

JAMES BOOTH, R.M.

No. 42.

Major WILLIS, R.M., Marton, to the UNDER SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Resident Magistrate's Court, Marton, 19th May, 1876.

I have the honor to forward this my annual report on the state of the Natives in the Rangitiki, Manawatu, and Otaki Districts. Nothing of moment has occurred during the past year. Considerable quantities of land belonging to Maoris have passed into the occupation of Europeans by sale or lease, the latter being the most advantageous use to which the Maoris seem capable of putting their land. The number of the Maoris in these districts is gradually decreasing, principally by the departure of Maoris to less settled districts.

The late closely-contested election for a member of the House of Representatives for the Manawatu District seems to have roused the Maoris to a sense of their political responsibilities, no fewer than thirty-two applications to be placed on the electoral roll having been sent in from the Manawatu district alone.

There have been very few criminal charges brought against Maoris during the past year, chiefly for minor offences; amongst them were three charges for larceny, in only one of which cases was there a conviction.

I cannot report any decrease of drunkenness amongst them, or any increase of industrial or agricultural pursuits.

At Awahuri a Native school has been determined on, and a school-room and teacher's house are now being built. This and the school at Otaki are the only Native schools in the district.

The only troubles during the year have been at Oroua Bridge, with regard to railway works, and at Kakariki on the question of land to be taken for railway purposes. Both difficulties have been satisfactorily settled by Mr. J. Booth, Resident Magistrate.

I have, &c.,

W. J. WILLIS,

Resident Magistrate.

The Under Secretary, Native Office, Wellington.

No. 43.

Mr. A. MACKAY, Commissioner of Native Reserves, Nelson, to the UNDER SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Native Reserves Office, Nelson, 17th May, 1876.

I have the honor, in compliance with your circular letter No. 9, of March 30th, to furnish the annual report on the Natives of my district.