

1877.

NEW ZEALAND.

FURTHER REPORTS FROM OFFICERS IN NATIVE DISTRICTS.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by command of His Excellency.

No. 1.

Mr. H. W. BRABANT, R.M., to the Hon. the NATIVE MINISTER

SIR,—

Tauranga, 20th July, 1877.

In reply to your circular, requesting me to report on the state of the Natives in my district, I have the honor to do so as follows:—

I.—TAURANGA DISTRICT.

1. There is little change to remark on in the physical condition of the Natives of this district. A considerable number of deaths have taken place, while but few children have been born, and of these a large proportion die in infancy. The Native census is not yet quite completed, but it is evident that it will show a considerable decrease in the population since it was last taken.

The Natives have been assisted with medical attendance, comforts, &c., during illness to fullest extent practicable. Among the deaths which have occurred is that of the loyal chief Te Kuka Te Mea.

In regard to the criminal statistics of the district—two Natives were committed for trial at the Supreme Court during the past year, one for horse-stealing, and one for unlawfully wounding another Native. The summary convictions of Natives at the Resident Magistrate's Court were as follows:—For larceny, 2; obstructing the police, 2; assault, 1; breach of Vagrant Act, 1; and drunkenness, 8.

In the civil Court a considerable number of cases were tried between Europeans and Natives but only four in which both plaintiff and defendant were Maoris. This is accounted for by most of the disputes between Natives having been settled by the Assessors, to several of whom I am much indebted for the assistance they have afforded me.

2. The Ngaiterangi tribe have, as usual, grown a considerable quantity of grain, and the crop has been a more productive one than it was last year. A number of them continue to work for the European settlers at seed and harvest times. I may remark that there appears to be an increased desire amongst them to dispose of their surplus lands to Europeans. One purchase of considerable extent has taken place during the past year, besides a number of small ones, and others are, I believe, in the course of negotiation. The individualization of the Native titles has been proceeded with by me in the Commissioner's Court, but, having made a special report to you on this subject, it is unnecessary for me to allude further to it here.

3. As to the state of law and order of the Natives in this district, of the greater number I can remark that they are thoroughly amenable to our laws, generally honest, and as well disposed to Government as could be wished. I must, however, except a party of semi-disaffected Natives who reside at Te Puna, only a few miles out of Tauranga, on the Katikati Road. They principally belong to the Pirirakau and Ngatirangiwewehi Hapus, and consist altogether of about forty-five males, besides women and children. These Natives profess to belong to the "King" party, are in constant communication with them, and make it their boast that they have never surrendered since they were in arms against Government. They are most of them living on Government (confiscated) land, which they profess still to hold on their ancient title (or rather on the title of some individuals of them). These few Natives, Sir, may, I think, be regarded as typical of the "Native difficulty" as it exists in New Zealand at present. They have no doubt the will to disturb the peace of the country, were it not that the large majority of the Natives holding different opinions renders any scheme with this aim in their opinion at present too hazardous; but they say they are only "biding their time." They are but partially subject to our laws; but, to make them wholly so, it would be necessary to enforce the law "at the point of the bayonet." This course the Parliament and the country having decided against, the "Native difficulty," such as it is, still exists; but it is growing less formidable year by year.

II.—BAY OF PLENTY.

In addition to the Tauranga District, I am placed in general charge of Native matters in the adjoining ones of Opotiki and Maketu. In respect to them, I find but little to add to the remarks which have been made by the resident Native officers.