

proportion of 399 males and 293 females. These numbers divided into adults and non-adults give the following results, viz.: Adults, 470; and non-adults, 222: in the proportion of—Adult males, 284; adult females, 186; male children, 115; female children, 107.

A considerable diminution has taken place in the numbers of the Natives in the aforesaid districts since the census of June, 1874, at which date they numbered 867. Their decrease to the present number has resulted from two causes—viz., a high rate of mortality in comparison with the number of births, and the departure of a large number for the North Island and other places. The decrease by this cause alone during the last four years amounts to 146, and by deaths to 135; while there were only 92 births during the same period to counteract the deficiency by the above causes.

The mortality alluded to has been confined almost entirely to the adult population, only eight deaths out of the whole number being children. A large proportion of the deaths are the results of old age, twelve were caused by a type of low fever that attacked the residents of the Pelorus and Queen Charlotte Sound during the summer of 1875, and two deaths were caused by suicide, and two by drowning.

With the exception of the epidemic alluded to above, and a few cases of a similar nature that have occurred amongst the Natives in Motueka and Nelson, the prevailing sickness has been of a bronchial nature, but the deaths that resulted therefrom have not been numerous; the decay, therefore, that has taken place is mainly attributable to natural causes.

I annex a Table (B) of the deaths that have taken place since June, 1874, by which it will be seen that the highest mortality has been amongst the adult males.

Table C exhibits the numbers of the Native population in the aforesaid districts in 1874, as compared with the population of the same districts in 1878. Reference to this table will show that the deaths in most of the districts double the births, and in one instance quadruples them. The only district that shows an increase of births over deaths to an appreciable extent is Queen Charlotte Sound; the cause of this is no doubt attributable to the large admixture of European blood amongst the parents. I suggested in my report of May 17, 1876, the advisability of introducing a system of registration amongst the Natives to facilitate the compilation of a correct census of the population, besides offering a means of determining whether the race is declining in numbers or otherwise. Such system would also be of considerable value for the purpose of determining the age and relationship of individuals, in cases where the proprietorship of land is in dispute.

The mode suggested by me for adoption was the same that prevailed in England before the introduction of "The Registration Act, 1836;" but, in place of the minister of the parish, the Native Assessors should be required to register births and deaths free of charge, and furnish periodical returns to the European officials. This mode, although an imperfect one, would, if adopted, be a step towards securing a better system than exists at present.

I have endeavoured since the census of 1874 to keep a registry of the kind alluded to, and the information obtained in this way has afforded a means of ascertaining the rate at which the Native population comprised in the present census are increasing or decreasing, by comparison with their numbers in previous years; and, although the period of time is short, the information on which the foregoing calculations are based is of sufficient value to afford certain evidence that the numbers of the people are diminishing rapidly.

The continuous decrease of numbers is further evidenced by Table D (annexed), showing the rate of two decades from 1858. At that date the population of the districts under review numbered 1,214, in the proportion of 735 males and 479 females; the difference, therefore, between the numbers at that date and now represents a decrease equal to 45 per cent. during the two decenary periods under consideration. It should, however, be borne in mind that fully 20 per cent. of the decrease is attributable to immigration.

Another point that is exemplified by the above-mentioned table is the paucity of females. This fact, combined with the inadequate number of births that occur to counteract the high rate of mortality that prevails, readily accounts for the decline in numbers. Apart from this, however, it is difficult to account for the causes that produce this condition of affairs. The decay of the race has been attributed to the want of fecundity in the females; but there would seem also to be a deficiency of vigour in the reproductive power of the males, as sexual unions between the females and Europeans are usually prolific, but unions with males of their own race are rarely so.

The prudential checks to population which operate in many parts of the world exercise no retarding influence with the Natives, as they usually possess an abundance of good land with every facility for obtaining the necessaries of life, to which is added the advantage of dwelling in a climate of greater salubrity than is enjoyed in most parts of the world; but, notwithstanding all these advantages, that tend to keep a population in a normal condition, the Maori is gradually passing away.

The main causes, apart from other reasons that may be advanced for the decline of the Native race, are their low social habits, the want of fecundity of the females, the inequality of the sexes in a directly inverse order to that obtaining amongst the population of other countries in a healthy condition, and the great paucity of births, together with a high rate of mortality. All these influences tend to show that, so long as so many and such powerful causes adverse to the increase of population exist, any result except decrease is impossible.

I have, &c.,

ALEXANDER MACKAY,  
Commissioner.

The Under Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

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### No. 23.

Mr. ALEXANDER MACKAY, C.C., to the UNDER SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Wellington, 26th September, 1878.

I have the honor to enclose herewith the census of the Native population residing in Otago, inclusive of Ruapuke and Stewart Island.