

1880.

NEW ZEALAND.

REPORTS FROM OFFICERS IN NATIVE DISTRICTS.

[In continuation of G.-4, presented 11th June, 1880.]

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

No. 1.

Major MAIR, Native Agent, Auckland, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,—

Native Office, Auckland, 29th May, 1880.

In presenting my annual report upon the condition of Native affairs in the district under my charge, I have the honor to remark that the year has been a period of rest, with few important events to record; and that the lengthy report upon Waikato furnished by Mr. Grace last year renders it unnecessary that I should go very fully into some of the points which come within the scope of a report of this nature.

The general health of the Maoris during the past year has been, perhaps, better than the average of former years: there has been a good deal of sickness, it is true, and a growing desire to obtain medical aid; but the mortality has certainly been lower than usual. It is satisfactory to note that drunkenness is decreasing, more especially among the Kingites.

As I have remarked in earlier reports, the Kingite section of the Native people is far more industrious than the Government Natives or "Kupapa." At Kopua especially, and all along the banks of the Waipa, a large quantity of grain was grown, but the prices of wheat and oats were anything but encouraging, and the people turned their attention to gum-digging, fully four hundred of them being thus employed at various points, extending from the neighbourhood of Hamilton to the shores of the Manukau Harbour. Tawhiao believes in the old Maori adage that "the fame of the warrior is less lasting than that of the man who is industrious in the production of food." Throughout the King country one constantly hears how Tawhiao has been urging his people to greater efforts in the way of planting food: at Aotea lately he has been collecting money to defray the cost of restoring a flour mill driven by water power, and some Europeans have been employed to do the work.

I do not think that crime is increasing. Very few cases come before the Courts, and, when they do, the offenders are treated exactly as Europeans would be under the circumstances.

The road from Cambridge towards Taupo is progressing steadily; practically there is now no opposition to its being carried on till it cuts the Tauranga-Napier Road. Within the last few weeks the consent of the Natives interested in the land has been obtained to the construction of a road through the Patetere country to Rotorua. This is a very important work, which has been opposed by the Natives for many years; their acquiescence now is largely due to the fact that at last they have been permitted to open up their land to settlement. The only other road work that has been going on lately in the Waikato country is that between Hikurangi and Kawhia, where a dray track has been made by the Kingites, under Tawhiao's direction, to enable fish, &c., to be brought from the sea inland. Tawhiao has had a large wagon built for use on this road.

There have not been any great political meetings during the past twelve months; Tawhiao has had small gatherings of chiefs at Hikurangi, to discuss matters connected with the Tariao form of worship (to establish Church government, in fact), and to frame some scheme for the better control of his people, who, during the last two or three years have shown a disposition to drift away from their allegiance. This has been in a great measure brought about by the desire of the people to sell land, and Tawhiao feels that so long as he can keep this desire in check he will retain some portion at least of his authority; but the only way in which he can prevent land-dealing within the district called the "King country" is to have the people constantly under his eye, and, yielding to his wishes in this respect, Rewi, Wahanui, Taonui, Te Rerenga, Matuahū, and other leading chiefs have consented to make Hikurangi their head-quarters, and bring all their followers there to live. I question very much whether this scheme will succeed. In the first place, numbers of the people will not respond; and secondly, the attempt to amalgamate, as it were, the tribes of Waikato, Ngatimaniapoto, Ngatiraukawa, and Ngatituwharetoa will prove a constant source of internal strife; the result will be that Tawhiao's subjects will again drift away to their ancestral places of abode, and he will possess less influence than before. As I have stated above, the past twelve months has been a year of rest with the King people: the Native mind does not appear to be in an active condition, it appears content to be left alone, and there can be no question as to the wisdom of gratifying it in this respect.

It is very evident that Tawhiao wishes to live at peace with all men: he has no sympathy with aggressive action, and it is the knowledge of his feeling in this respect that has all along inclined me

to the belief that there would not be any serious outbreak on the West Coast, for, unless assured of aid from Waikato, it is not probable that Te Whiti and Tohu would resort to arms to oppose the force arrayed against them.

Rewi has retired from the prominent position which he assumed in 1878. He is both anxious and willing to aid in bringing about a solution of the difficulty, but he admits his inability to exercise any influence independently of Tawhiao.

The loyal chief Paora Tuhaere had a meeting at Orakei in March; a full account of the proceedings was sent to your office. The attendance was small, only the local Natives, a few from the North, and two or three Kingites being present. The principal points discussed were certain acts of the Government and the Parliament, which were strongly condemned; but this cannot be regarded as an expression of opinion on the part of the northern tribes, as very few of those who took part in the meeting knew anything about the subjects upon which they deliberated. They simply wanted something to talk about, and, as the Government did not recognize the meeting—or “Parliament,” as it was called—in any way, it was a safe platform to criticise the acts of the present Administration.

The Native Lands Court has been sitting at Cambridge for the last three weeks, and a large amount of business has been got through. It is satisfactory to note that influential chiefs of the King party now attend the Court, not to obstruct, but for the purpose of looking after individual interests in the various blocks.

Of the loyal Natives in the district I have nothing of much importance to record; from year to year there is little change in their condition, excepting the gradual diminution of their numbers. They have been amply provided with schools: indeed it may be said the greatest possible facility is afforded for the education of Maori children, but in many places, when the novelty of the thing wears off, it is very difficult to keep the school together. It is a melancholy fact that, as a rule, the uneducated or primitive Maori is morally a better man than the one who has received a partial English education.

In conclusion, I think that I may state with confidence that in the district under my charge Native affairs are comparatively in a satisfactory state. The large reductions made a few months since in the salaries of Native officials and pensioners produced in some instances a little soreness, and there were not wanting gratuitous advisers who fostered this feeling and made it their business to impress upon the Natives that it was the beginning of a policy of oppression under which the Maoris would gradually lose all their rights. This soreness has in a great measure passed away. It was explained to them that it was necessary for the general welfare that large reductions in the expenditure of the colony should be made, and also that European officers suffered as well, besides which the Natives recognized the fact that none of them ever performed any duty worth naming, and that the source which gave had a right to take away.

I may state that I assumed charge of the combined districts of Auckland, Waikato, and Raglan on the 1st of January last; that I am necessarily absent for considerable periods from the chief office visiting the various settlements in Waikato and Raglan, as well as holding sittings as Resident Magistrate of the latter place, and that the work of the department would not be carried out successfully but for the valuable assistance rendered by the chief clerk, Mr. Vickers, and the interpreter and translator, Mr. Brown, both of whom, in addition to the work done in this office, devote a great amount of time and trouble to the duty of obtaining information and working in various ways for other departments of the public service.

I have, &c.,

W. G. MAIR,

Government Native Agent, Auckland and Waikato.

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.