

No. 6.

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SIR,—

Native Office, Thames, 17th May, 1882.

In accordance with the request contained in your circular No. 4, of the 12th ultimo, I have the honor to forward herewith my annual report upon the state of the natives in the Hauraki or Thames District.

Condition of the Natives.

The condition of the natives in my district, in so far as concerns their industrial pursuits, education, and social condition, is much the same as when reported on by me last year. The improvement that I spoke of as being then noticeable in connection with agriculture still exists, and is, on account of the reason then given, namely, growing necessity, likely to continue. Their time is, however, for a great part occupied in digging for kauri gum, which takes them away from their homes for a considerable period during the year. This industry still continues a profitable one in this district, and a large number of both Europeans and Maoris as in previous years prefer it to any other kind of employment.

With regard to the education of their children, the natives here seem to place little value upon it, preferring to allow them to remain idle at home, or to accompany their parents when they go on gum digging expeditions in the bush. I believe there are not more than two native children attending the district school, and those not very regularly. I do not think any alteration for the better is likely to take place in this matter until measures are taken by which the parents are held accountable for the regular attendance of their children at school for at least a portion of the year.

The social condition of the natives here is on the whole good; drunkenness is not at all prevalent amongst them and crime is rare, there having been at the three Resident Magistrates' Courts in this district, namely, Thames, Coromandel, and Ohinemuri, during the past year only four convictions for drunkenness, two for petty larceny, one for assault, and one for breach of the peace. This, I think, considering the large area of the district, namely, from Cape Colville to Te Aroha, speaks well for the character and behaviour of the natives.

General Remarks.

Notwithstanding that as a rule the Hauraki natives are not more lazy than those of other districts, and their social condition, in so far as regards drunkenness and crime, is on a par with or even better than that of others, still they are by no means the unoffending or easy-to-deal-with sort of people that a stranger would be led to suppose. The number of tribes in the district, their different politics, their numerous religious faiths, and last, but not least, their petty jealousies, make them by no means an easy people to manage; so that, taking the district as a whole, it is, if I may use the simile, like a ship which, although not having one large leak that endangers her safety, still has such a number of small ones occasionally bursting out that continued attention is required to keep them stopped. I must, however, say this for these natives, that troublesome as they are through the causes above mentioned there has been no instance during the last two years in which these difficulties, great and small, have not been got over by prompt attention, and the representation of their causes of trouble and complaint to head-quarters.

Since writing my last report, the Komata Road (which I therein referred to as about to be commenced,) has been completed, and communication has now been established from Thames to Paeroa, Ohinemuri, and thence on to Te Aroha. A coach is now running daily to the first-mentioned township. The telegraph line that previously, on account of native opposition, had to branch off at Hikutaia, and be carried from there by an almost impassable route to Katikati, has now been extended to Paeroa, where there is an office, and it is at the present time being continued on to Te Aroha, thereby meeting a much felt want of the Europeans, and numbers also of natives, in those localities.

Tukukino, the old native chief, who so long successfully opposed these signs of progress, has gracefully retired from his obstructive position, and allowed these works to be carried on without opposition. This action of the old man's is, I think, very creditable to him, especially when it is considered that no fee or reward was given to get him to withdraw his opposition, he merely doing so from what may be called "the force of circumstances." That his relinquishment of his former position is genuine, may, I think, be concluded from the fact that during the Hon. the Native Minister's visit to Ohinemuri, in March last, he (Tukukino) asked for a spring cart to enable himself and people to utilize the newly-made road by taking their produce over it to Paeroa Township for sale, which request was granted him. I may remark here that, on the road being completed, or rather before it was really completed, the natives in the district were amongst the first to make use of it, and evidently were quite aware that it was intended *pro bono publico*, and not for one race only. The same remarks, only in a lesser degree, apply to the telegraph now working at Paeroa.

A considerable number of Hauraki natives attended the King meeting that was held at Hikurangi during the month of April, 1881; but, with the exception of Ngatihako, and some of the Ngatipaoa and Ngatitamatera Tribes, they attended it more out of curiosity and amusement than anything else. During the meeting, a curious instance of the force of example occurred, which may not be uninteresting. As is usual at those meetings, everything that was said and done, both by visitors as well as Tawhiao's own people, was to his acknowledgment and glorification as Maori King, and some of the tribes handed over their lands into his keeping, which meant that roads, railways, and surveys, also sales and leases, were not to be allowed in connection with them. This action rather put the Hauraki delegates into the proverbial "corner," as nearly all their lands are already sold. However, not to be outdone in generosity, they, or some of them, handed over Te Aroha, Moehau, and Wai-kawau Blocks, within the Hauraki District, to Tawhiao, and thereby relieved their consciences of the fear of being behind-hand with their brother visitors in generosity and admiration for their so-called King. When I state that these three blocks had already been sold and conveyed to the Crown, the grimness of the joke will, I think, be apparent; and it is to be hoped, for the sake of the givers, that Tawhiao was ignorant at the time as to who was the real owner of these lands.