

Government amongst the Thames Natives previous to my holding that position, will speak with praise of the assistance that Charlotte has often rendered them, and will be grieved to hear of her death. Her sickness was not of long duration, and was brought about by her having run a nail into her foot, which caused great pain and swelling to the whole of the leg, and which eventually resulted in her death.

The diseases from which the Hauraki Natives have suffered during the past year have been principally epidemic, viz., measles in July and scarlet fever in December. Fortunately, neither of these diseases committed as much havoc amongst them as it was feared they would do, thanks to the efficient medical assistance that was called in as soon as the diseases were discovered. Had scarlet fever obtained a firm hold amongst them it is difficult to say what would have been the result, as, what with the want of drainage always found round Native settlements, and the collective and confined way in which they live, such an infectious disease could not have been stamped out before it had carried off a large number of them as its victims.

I am pleased to be able to report a change of feeling on the part of some of the Natives regarding the subject of education. The Natives of a settlement called Kirikiri, near Shortland, seeing the necessity of educating their young people, have, during the past year, applied to the Government for a Native school, and the same has been erected and is now daily attended by the Native and European children in the district. The site for the school and teacher's residence—about four and a half acres—was given by the Natives under "The Native School Sites Act, 1880," and the regular attendance of the Native children at school shows that the parents now appreciate the advantage of having the means of educating their children in their midst. W. H. Taipari, Hoani Nahe, and Hori Matene are the Natives who gave the land for a school-site, and who have taken an active part from the commencement in getting a school established in that locality. Mr. R. O. Stewart, formerly of Tolago Bay, has been appointed to take charge, and from what I can learn he is well liked by the Natives, and the school is likely to be a success.

A sitting of the Native Land Court was held at Paeroa, Ohinemuri, in the months of April and June last, at which the Crown's title to the Ohinemuri Gold Field Block—that is, so much of it as had been purchased from the Native owners—was settled. After a protracted sitting an area of about 65,000 acres out of 73,000 acres was awarded to the Crown, the remainder—representing the interests of owners who up to that time had refused to sell—was allocated, according to arrangement made in Court, by the Government representative and the Native owners, within the different blocks of which those unsold interests originally formed part. The reserves for the Natives were also fixed by the Court and amounted to 10 per cent. out of the area of land that each Native had sold to the Crown at the time he or she disposed of their interest. The Court ordered the title to these reserves to be inalienable. As it is thought desirable that the Government should own the whole of this gold field, excepting of course the reserves, the purchase of the before-mentioned unsold shares has been pushed on since the Court sat, and a considerable area of the same has since become Crown property.

At a sitting of the Native Land Court at the Thames, in January, 1882, the long outstanding Piako Block was called on, but very little was done towards putting it on a satisfactory footing. The large sum of £21,000 has been expended on this block during the last ten years (principally during the years 1873 to 1878), nearly all of which was advanced to members of the Ngatipaoa tribe, numbers of whom are now dead; but unfortunately these people only own about one-half of the block, the other half being owned by the Ngatimaru, Ngatihako, and Ngatitamatera tribes—the former being considerably the largest owner—and they have had little or no advances. The Ngatipaoa, who had received nearly all the money (or rather goods), and spent it, had therefore no interest in surveying their portion and putting it through the Court, or in endeavouring in any way to bring about a settlement, as it was quite apparent to them that they had nothing more to get in the way of payment, and consequently they were in no hurry to commence a survey of the portion claimed by them, which, seeing the large sums of money that had been advanced to them, they out of good faith should have done. They would neither make a survey themselves, nor give evidence in Court as to their boundaries in order that a survey might be made by the Government; and, as a last resource, the Ngatimaru people (whose boundary abuts upon that of Ngatipaoa) had to be prevailed upon to go into Court and have the line fixed by their evidence alone. The Ngatipaoa, under Wini Kerei, their leader, showed their objection to this proceeding by leaving the Court in a body as soon as the first witness for Ngatimaru stood up to give evidence, thereby leaving it to be understood that they claim the right hereafter to reopen the question of the tribal boundary between themselves and Ngatimaru. The boundary was, however, given by Ngatimaru in Court, but, as it could only be fixed approximately on the map, there yet remained the task of laying it off on the ground, and this it has up to the present been found difficult to do. The locality in which the most difficulty is experienced is on the east bank of the Piako River, and working eastwards through to the Turua Bush. In this locality others than Ngatimaru own the land, and it is to them we have to look to get the correct boundary fixed. The erstwhile troublesome Ngatihako have claims here, and they have to be consulted, and they have refused to point out the boundary unless a meeting of all concerned first takes place, and a general assent to the survey is given by all the owners of the land. There appears to be a great deal of objection amongst the Natives all round to this survey, principally because nearly all the payment was given to the Ngatipaoa tribe, and other tribes profess to be now fearful that, should the land owned by Ngatipaoa not be found sufficient to pay for what has been had, some of their portions will be taken to make up the deficiency. In fact, Ngatimaru say they would not have gone into Court and given the boundary had they not been first promised by the Under-Secretary of the Land Purchase Department that they should be allowed to return in cash the small advances (about £100) had by them, and that the prohibition proclamation against private purchase, at present over the whole of the Piako Block, should be removed from their portion.