

districts, adjudicating in cases of every description. Some decisions of a most extraordinary character have been told to me, but the Natives appear to invariably manage to ultimately settle the disputes by mutual consent, and they loyally uphold and carry out the *dicta* of these curiously-composed tribunals. Heavy fees are charged, but I am unable to say what is the ultimate disposal of these. The notion is entirely confined to the Ngapuhis. The Rarawas fight very shy of these new-fangled ideas, and prefer to carry themselves and their troubles into the clearer atmosphere of the Resident Magistrates' Courts.

The first election under "The Native Committees Act, 1883," has been recently held in this district. Very little general interest was taken in the result. As yet the matter is but little understood, and the Rarawas appear suspicious lest the Committee should abuse their power, while the Ngapuhis do not like the idea of their self-constituted tribunals being overshadowed by a body endowed by law with certain judicial powers. It is of course premature at the present time to express an opinion as to the ultimate results of the working of the Act.

One very satisfactory feature to be noted in connection with the Maoris in the North is their increased sobriety. I mentioned this fact in my last report, and I am glad indeed to say that the improvement noted then bids fair to become lasting. On every occasion of a gathering of Natives, one can see two out of every three wearing the blue ribbon. In several cases Natives who used by their rowdy and drunken conduct to be a pest to the place have become, by temperance agencies, quite respectable members of society.

The district has been free from crime of a serious nature, and, though a large number of cases against Natives have been heard in the Court during the past year, they have mostly been for minor offences.

The Dog Registration Act is still a sore point with the Natives. They resist it by every means in their power. On one occasion the collection of a penalty under the Act nearly led to a serious breach of the peace, and, had it not been for firm and effective measures taken, the law would have been openly defied. As it was, six Natives who misbehaved themselves and resisted the police were brought to Court and heavily fined, and, the amounts being paid, the matter ended. One hundred and twenty-six Natives purchased collars last year, principally of the Rarawa Tribe; but the collection entailed more trouble than it was worth. The dislike to this particular tax is very deep and widespread, and its collection at any time will be liable to be met with forcible resistance. The County Council, this year, has so far taken no steps to enforce the Act, and, I think, wisely. Looking to the fact that, while last year the tax was very vigorously enforced here, in the adjoining Counties of Hokianga and Bay of Islands the Act was allowed to remain in abeyance, it appears to me to be an injustice to make these Natives pay while their more fortunate brethren, just across the boundary, escape free.

The only other matter of importance forming a subject of dispute with the Natives has been the passage of a portion of the Victoria-Okaihau Road through the Mangataeore Block. The surveyor, Mr. Garsed, employed in carrying out the work, was turned off the land and prevented from cutting the lines. The leading obstructionist was summoned to the Court, and was fined £10 and costs. The fine has been paid, but as Mr. Garsed has not yet returned to the work I am unable to say whether the example made has had a salutary effect. The Natives appear very obstinate and determined to prevent the making of the road in this particular place.

Surprisingly little land is now cultivated by the residents at the different settlements. No crops of any consequence are now raised, and during a portion of the year the people depend entirely upon supplies procured from the stores, to be paid for by the proceeds of the sale of gum. Whereas formerly large areas could be seen planted with potatoes, kumaras, taros, corn, &c., now small patches dotted about here and there form the sole visible proof of industry. The kaingas consequently have an almost deserted appearance.

The Native schools are still in full operation, but the late prevalence of sickness has militated greatly against their success. I am hoping that in a short time matters will improve. No pains are being spared to place all the schools on the most efficient footing possible.

I am, &c.,

The Under-Secretary, Native Department, Wellington.

H. W. BISHOP,
Resident Magistrate.

No. 3.

S. VON STÜRMER, Esq., R.M., Hokianga, to the UNDER-SECRETARY, Native Department.

SIR,— Resident Magistrate's Office, Hokianga, 29th April, 1884.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Circular Letter No. 3, of the 9th April, 1884, requesting me to forward my usual annual report upon the state of the Natives in this district, for presentation to Parliament, and now beg to forward the report herewith.

It is very gratifying to me that I am still able, as last year, to report favourably on the state of the large Native population in my district. Year by year they are improving their knowledge of our language and customs, and gradually and surely becoming more alive to the advantages to be gained by a closer and more intimate communication with their pakeha neighbours, and, though the change for the better is not so visible to one residing amongst them, when we come to look back for a few years we can then plainly see the rapid strides they have made towards