

and a general change in all things upon the earth, during the month of March. Some of her more infatuated followers sold much of their property at low values, and wasted the money, expecting to have no further need of it. As nothing came of her predictions, the greater part of these deluded people have left for their homes; she is still with a few of her friends and relations, visiting from one settlement to another, distracting the minds of a small section of the weaker minded of the Natives from their usual and more profitable employment.

The Natives continue to occupy and waste much of their time at meetings to discuss political, *i.e.*, "Treaty of Waitangi" questions. A large one is to be held at Te Tii, Waitangi, on the 23rd instant, at which Tawhiao and a number of Natives from Waikato are expected to be present. The principal subject for discussion is the expediency of Waikatos and Ngapuhis jointly sending another embassy to England to lay their alleged grievances before the Home Government; great expectations from this are entertained by many, such as the return of all confiscated lands, also the foreshores, and various other rights, which they consider they are entitled to under the provisions of the Treaty of Waitangi, and of which they have been wrongfully deprived. These hopes and claims have been fostered and encouraged, in a great degree, by well-intentioned, but ill-advised people, both in England and the Colonies. The Natives are displaying much greater interest than in former years in electoral matters, as was shown by the interest taken, and the number of votes recorded in this district at the last election for the Northern Maori Electorate. This I consider a move in the right direction.

Drunkenness, I am glad to say, is far less common than in former years, and is, I think, steadily decreasing; this effect may in a measure be caused by their having less abundant means with which to purchase liquor, formerly obtained from land sales, &c., there being always this point in favour of a Maori toper, he can either drink or leave it alone, as means or opportunity allow, he is rarely a sot or a complete slave to his appetite for drink, as is so frequently the case with Europeans; this want of means, however, is not the entire reason, there really appears a reaction, some have donned the blue ribbon, though these are by no means numerous. I am sorry, however, to say that many of the young men waste much time and money in horse-racing and billiards, to both of which pastimes they are very partial.

It is by no means common for Natives to appear before the Resident Magistrate's Court as defendants in criminal cases, and during the past year but one on any serious charge. Civil cases against them, however, are numerous. The Native Committee, elected under "The Native Committee's Act, 1883," has apparently been so far a failure; I am unaware of any business having been transacted beyond the election of a chairman; they seem to prefer their own Committees, probably from the fact of these not being elected under Government supervision, these Committees, however, having no legal status, appeals from them to the Resident Magistrate's Court are frequent, or rather many cases are brought, during the hearing of which it transpires that they had been investigated before the Committee, the decision of which the losing party had refused to abide by. My experience is that the Natives much prefer, on the whole, having their cases heard, and troubles entertained by a European Magistrate, having really little or no faith in those of their own race; and I am of opinion that the day is not far distant when Native Committee tribunals will be a thing of the past. I find that the decisions of the Court are obeyed as promptly as by Europeans, and with as little or even less dissatisfaction.

In industrial pursuits the Natives in this district are very backward; they do not grow sufficient food for their own wants. This year their crop of potatoes are good and will probably suffice, no wheat and but little maize has been grown; they use considerable quantities of flour; the whole of which is purchased with money procured from other sources. They have some stock, horses, cattle, sheep and pigs, the sale of the surplus of which bring in some money. Many still continue to work on the gum fields and do fairly well; the yield of these fields is, however, steadily decreasing, entailing much more labour to produce a given quantity, the price of the kauri gum obtained is also lower than of late years. Some Natives find employment in the kauri bushes, falling and getting out timber for the saw-mills and squaring for export. Others obtain work in the bushes and on the roads with their bullock teams; I have also noticed a few working on the roads under contract to the County Council. The Natives in the more immediate neighbourhood of Russell earn high wages for a few days in each month coaling the Union Steam Shipping Company's steamers, working very hard one day and doing but little or nothing for several succeeding. This they appear to greatly prefer to steady work at less daily wages, at which they could really earn more money during the year. During the open season they also gather oysters for export, and these have for some time past been a considerable source of income, the oyster rocks having now been worked for several years without intermission, excepting during the short close season, show signs of exhaustion; if closed for two or three years they would recover to the ultimate benefit of all concerned in the business. If this is not soon done the whole industry, an important one for the district, is in danger of being destroyed. While on this subject, I may be pardoned for mentioning one constant source of irritation between Natives and Europeans—they, the Natives, contend that the rocks from which the oysters are taken fronting lands still held under Native title, or under Crown grants to themselves, are their's, and object to their European neighbours taking them without payment, this view of the question appears just and fair, although there may be a doubt as to its being law, it would settle a great deal dissatisfaction if the law officers of the Crown were asked to give an expression of their opinion thereon.

Shore or bay whaling of late has neither been successful or satisfactory. One party of Natives near Whangaroa Heads, however, last July were fortunate enough to capture a very large black or right whale (*Embaleena australis*), the proceeds of which, whale-bone and oil, brought them in but little—less than £1,000. Such prizes are, however, extremely rare, but few of this description of whale frequent the coast so far north, the ordinary kind is that known as the "Humpback" (*Megaptera Nova Zealandica*), a far less valuable species.

The Native inhabitants of this district are in my opinion, slowly but surely decreasing, the deaths exceed the births in number, the majority of Native women have but few children, many none