

also, medical assistance is more readily obtainable; and it is a noticeable fact that those people residing near the sea are freer from maladies of all kinds than the inland population.

No instances of crime whatever have taken place during the past year in this district, and very few cases of drunkenness have occurred. The Natives are, as a whole, peaceful and well-behaved, but a few in or about the Poroti District are, and have always been, to a certain extent, an impracticable part of the community. This appears to me especially to be the outcome of Hauhaism, resulting from the advent of some of the escaped prisoners from the Kawau during the Waikato war.

The only difficulty that has arisen with these people during the year has been in relation to the school buildings erected by the Government at Poroti, at the request of the Natives, in 1878, and with the distinct understanding that they would cede the site, which they now refuse to do, and also acting under adverse advice, refuse to allow the buildings to be removed. I expect, however, in the course of a short time, this obstruction will be overcome, and the buildings removed to another site that has been obtained at Tangiteroria under "The Native School Sites Act, 1880."

The population of the district has nearly, though almost imperceptibly, declined during the year, including Mangakahia, fully eighty deaths have occurred, while less than half that number of births have taken place.

Bay of Islands.

In the portion of this large district under my charge, as a whole, the Natives have, during the year, been quiet and well behaved.

The schools, I am informed, have been fairly attended. There have been a great many deaths, for the most part from typhoid fever, and some from other causes, natural decay, etc., and the Natives are slowly and steadily decreasing in numbers.

In this district the settlements are not, as is usually the case in other districts, situated in low swampy places, but generally on high volcanic table lands, consequently the mortality can only be ascribed to the Native habits being devoid of cleanliness and regard to the sanitary arrangements.

In many instances they reside in good wooden buildings, and with some approach to European style, but even here the reversion to their original habits is more forcibly impressed upon the observer from the contrast—good but uncleanly furniture in one room, whilst in another the residents recline on the floor with mats beneath them, in the good old Maori state.

There have been a number of small offences amongst them during the year, chiefly petty larcenies, common assaults, etc., but only one or two instances of felony. Drunkenness has also much diminished.

The people generally occupy themselves in cultivating their lands and in gum-digging, few opportunities presenting themselves for other occupations, except a few of the coast Natives, who in some seasons join Europeans in whale fishery.

The prophetess Maria Pungari prophesied that the world would come to an end on the 28th, or not later than the 31st March, erected an encampment at Waioro Stream, about a mile north of Kaikohe, early in March, and which, through the ill-advised and indiscreet action of some Europeans, created quite a scare for a few days, but which quietly subsided after the 31st ultimo, and, the fallacy of the woman's predictions having been proved by the effluxion of time, the followers dispersed to their homes. A number of these had disposed of all their worldly chattels before leaving Waihou (the head of the Hokianga River), and will, consequently, during the coming winter feel severely the consequences of their ill-timed credulity.

A meeting of chiefs took place at Waitangi on the 23rd instant, when Tawhiao and one hundred and forty of his followers arrived in Russell from Auckland, and met the assembled Ngapuhi, to the number of about five hundred, at Waitangi.

After a war dance, and a great repast of meat, potatoes, kumaras, etc., the several parties commenced their speeches, a number of the Ngapuni people and minor chiefs consenting to sign the petition presented by Tawhiao and Te Wheoro, but all the principal chiefs refusing to sign any such document.

This is very significant, and leads one to believe they felt their hereditary chieftainship might be jeopardised should they consent to act in unison with Tawhiao, who might then be considered their king as well as of the Waikato people; a consideration, I believe, they would most sedulously avoid, if possible; as the meeting will probably extend over some days, the result will be communicated to the department by wire.

The constant gathering and wholesale destruction by the Europeans of the oysters on the fore-shore of the Bay of Islands is causing a considerable amount of uneasiness; the Natives asserting a claim to the shell-fish under the Treaty of Waitangi.

Whilst a great advance towards civilisation exists in the Bay of Islands District, and where the early church missionaries had located and laboured amongst the Natives, there is also a greater amount of political agitation continually carried on, and an amount of controversy among themselves that would appear almost incredible to any person unaccustomed to Maori habits and language.

In conclusion, I would beg to remark upon the present demeanour and action of the Natives, in contrast to their aspect many years since, and of which I have the most vivid recollection since the since the year 1836.

That the result of acquaintance and contact with their European neighbours has in a great measure benefited them is an undeniable fact; but at the same time, it has endued them with a far greater amount of dissimulation and untruthfulness than they formerly possessed, and coupled with the untiring efforts of some political agitators, whose semi-European education has placed a small amount of discrimination and knowledge in their power, rendering them capable of reading newspapers and other European publications, and then disseminating their own crude and erroneous construction as to the true contents of the same, is more particularly the case in the Bay of Islands District; and, as mentioned above, when contrasted with the dignified demeanour and more reliable actions of the